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SOUTHERN VOICE
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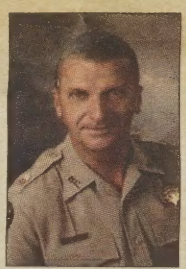
WWW.SOVO.COM JANUARY 18, 2008

Midtown crime sparks action from neighbors

Robberies on rise in area, but are resident tactics heavy-handed?

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

The Jan. 14 meeting of the Midtown-Ponce Security Alliance included a quirky moment when a young boy asked a hypothetical question: Should he run or use pepper spray if he was abducted by two men and they both had guns? The question left the moderator of the MPSA meeting, Col. Wayne Mock of the Midtown Blue security force, speechless.



Col. **Wayne Mock** (Photo courtesy Midtown Blue)

Yet the boy's question was similar in many ways to the hypotheticals asked by the adults in attendance, other than his repeated emphasis on both perpetrators being armed.

MPSA meetings like the one on Jan. 14 — which was attended by about 50 Midtown residents, police officials, politicians and TV news crews — can seem like chambers of distrust of the outside world. Attendees appeared frightened that everyone they encounter on the street has the potential to rob, rape and kill them. Not to mention lower their property values.

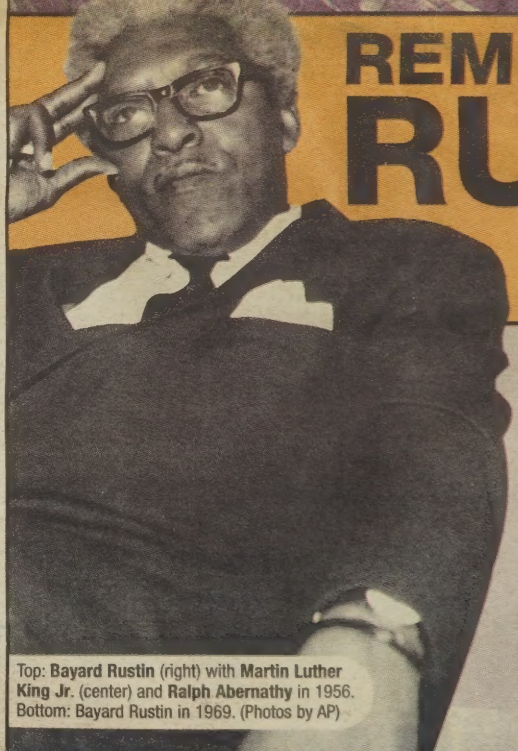
Col. Mock didn't alleviate those fears. Instead, he stressed that crime is around every corner, and criminals never stop plotting their next offense.

Should you be wary when you're at a Midtown gas station filling your car up? Absolutely, said Mock.

Should you be scared to honk your horn on the interstate because it might cause some guy to pull out a gun and shoot you? You ought to be — the interstate is where the fourth highest number of crimes occur, he said.

When you're saying your nightly prayers, should you worry about some gang of drug-addicted hooligans planning to break into your home? Damn straight.

Please see **CRIME** on **Page 8**



REMEMBERING RUSTIN

Surviving partner heads to ATL to honor King's gay adviser

Top: **Bayard Rustin** (right) with **Martin Luther King Jr.** (center) and **Ralph Abernathy** in 1956. Bottom: Bayard Rustin in 1969. (Photos by AP)

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Bayard Rustin was not a champion of gay rights until the final years of his life, but the political strategist and gifted orator has become one of the most lionized black gay figures of the 20th century for the instrumental role he played in organizing the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s.

Although he downplayed his sexual orientation as a private matter that didn't affect his role in the movement, history suggests it almost certainly did.

"It wasn't something he focused on, but I think there was a general feeling that had he not been gay, the way he was able to save lives in the movement, or ascend to a leadership position [wouldn't have had as many] obstacles," says Walter Naegle, Rustin's surviving partner who is scheduled to speak in Atlanta Jan. 23, just days after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday festivities.

Please see **RUSTN** on **Page 35**

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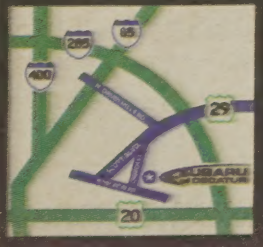

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MAILBOX

Obama is best choice for gay Georgians

To the Editors:

Recently in your article entitled "Presidential campaigns target gay Georgia voters" (news, Jan. 11), Lawrie Demorest was quoted as saying the Obama Campaign had not reached out for her support. Unfortunately, Ms. Demorest forgot that the Obama Campaign reached out to her last July. Lawrie has indicated to me that she did not remember our outreach and she has apologized profusely.

It is clear the Obama Campaign has reached out and continues to reach out to the LGBT community in Georgia and across the country.

The 2008 election is about change: Change America can believe in, and change that includes every LGBT American. Voters who care about LGBT equality are no longer willing to settle for mere promises. They want a demonstrated commitment to equality.

Sen. Barack Obama is the candidate who has shown that commitment. Among all the candidates in this race, only Sen. Obama included gays and lesbians as participants in the American Dream when announcing his decision to run for president. It was a first in American politics for the LGBT community and reflected the senator's long-standing commitment to our equal rights.

That commitment is manifest in Obama's record of accomplishment on LGBT rights.

Barack Obama sponsored the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in Illinois — which was incorporated into another bill and signed into law. While Congressional leaders weren't able to pass a bill that included gender identity — Obama made it happen in Illinois.

Fighting the spread of HIV and securing fully funded, accessible treatment for people with HIV or AIDS have always been top priorities for Barack Obama. He understands that the fight against HIV/AIDS requires an approach that is bold enough to set national standards and benchmarks for progress and deep enough to address the forces of poverty, racism, homophobia and unequal access to health care that all contribute to the spread of the disease.

Sen. Obama has supported the complete, unqualified repeal of the federal Defense of Marriage Act since he was a candidate for Senate. He has taken stronger positions on dismantling "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and enacting fully inclusive workplace protections than any candidate in this race, and he is either a co-sponsor or a strong supporter of every major piece of LGBT legislation in Congress today.

Sen. Obama's record of accomplishment stands in clear contrast to the other two leading Democrats in this race. Sen. Edwards can point to nothing tangible that he has accomplished for LGBT Americans, and his recent backing of LGBT rights must be measured against his support for both "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and DOMA during his candidacy for the Senate and his vote against immigration rights for gay couples while in office. Sen. Clinton continues to argue that "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and DOMA were good policies when they were enacted, just as she continues to oppose a full repeal of DOMA.

More important still, Obama joins his past record of accomplishment with a vision for achieving real progress going forward. We will not achieve change on LGBT rights if we limit our message of equality to those who already support us.

Barack Obama brings his message to skeptical audiences, and he challenges those who oppose change to stop using homophobia. During this campaign, he asked an African-American audience to confront the HIV/AIDS issues in the community and to not use homophobia as a stigma to avoid the topic.

Georgia and its LGBT leadership are important to our campaign. This race presents an historic opportunity: the opportunity to elect a candidate who has stood up for LGBT equality boldly and courageously for his entire career in public office. That candidate is Barack Obama.

In 2008, Georgia and the nation deserve nothing less.

STAMPP CORBIN
Chair, National LGBT Leadership Council
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SEND YOUR LETTERS:
email: lbrown@sovo.com
fax: 404-876-2709
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Suite 1-D, Atlanta, GA 30306

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1075 Zonolite Road, Suite 1-D
Atlanta, GA 30306
404-876-1819
(fax) 404-876-2709
editor@sovo.com
www.sovo.com
www.myspace.com/southern_voice

PUBLISHER
BOB GUNBY EXT. 24

EDITORIAL
Editor LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN EXT.19
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Contributors MATT HENNIE, JIM FARMER, MATT FORKE, JOE PHILLIPS, SHER PRUITT
Illustrators ALISON BECHDEL, DAVID BRADY
Online Editor REBECCA ARMENDARIZ
Webmaster STEVE RYAN
Content Manager QUINN MANSFIELD
qmansfield@window-media.com

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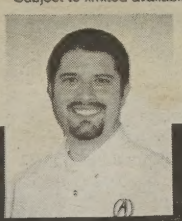

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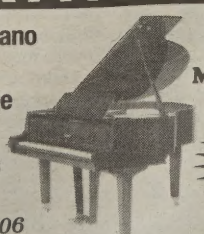
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ATL Pride at Civic Center on July 4 weekend

Organizers finalize plans for annual celebration

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

Atlanta Pride will be held at the Civic Center during July 4th weekend, but costs to rent the facility are much higher than anticipated, Pride Executive Director Donna Narducci said this week.

Narducci said Atlanta Pride received a rental agreement fee Jan. 14 from the Civic Center much higher than the anticipated $30,000-$50,000 Atlanta Pride expected. Negotiations this week finalized the agreement at between $60,000-$80,000, Narducci said. The rental fee does not include the fact the Civic Center works with union labor for clean up as well as some security, which adds to Pride costs.

When using Piedmont Park for the festival that attracts some 300,000 people over the three-day weekend, costs incurred for using the park included about $15,000 for clean up and $15,000 for repairing any damaged property, Narducci said.

"Obviously this is way over the amount we were anticipating," Narducci said Tuesday. "But now we want people to come out and support us. It's a holiday weekend and this year will be new and different and exciting. We could use everyone's support."

Atlanta Pride, as well as the Dogwood Festival, the Peachtree Road Race and the city's Jazz Festival, were forced out of Piedmont Park this year due to the state's severe drought, according to a new city policy released to the public Jan. 11.

Dianne Harnell Cohen, commissioner of the city's Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, acknowledged this was a difficult time, but this was the best option to preserve the parks for future events.

"We know this is a very big challenge and we are in this together," she said.

The Civic Center is the choice for Atlanta Pride organizers to hold the annual celebration, scheduled for July 4-6. (Photo by Dyana Bagby)

Impact on Pride sports events, Page 18

Narducci has said she hoped the city would work with festival organizers to either waive permit fees or at least lower fees to help with the last-minute scrambling festival organizers are being forced to undergo.

Greg Pridgeon , chief of staff for Mayor Shirley Franklin, said the city has not considered that option.

Numerous events are typically planned around the city during the July 4th weekend, most notably the Peachtree Road Race. Narducci said she doesn't expect any "tripping over" the race because it is held in the morning while Atlanta Pride begins in the evening.

"It could be kind of fun — we may have more folks coming to town," she said. "After the initial shock [of the venue change], we're getting excited about infusing new ideas. The Pride committee is up for it."

Narducci said the Civic Center is the best option for Atlanta Pride because it will help keep the event intact — the indoor venues provide places for such popular events as the YouthPride Prom and the Commitment Ceremony. The AIDS Quilt could also be displayed indoors, perhaps for the entire weekend as well, she said.

Major corporate sponsors are still backing the event despite the changes.

"As the official airline for Atlanta Pride, Delta is ready to welcome GLBT visitors from around the world to one of the premier U.S. Pride events. We're ready to help Pride-goers with their reservations to Pride whenever the date is officially set," said Delta Air Lines spokesperson Andy McDill, calling Pride "an important sponsorship for us in our hometown."

Atlanta City Council member Anne Fauver, a lesbian who represents District 6 where Piedmont Park is located, said she looks forward to Atlanta Pride, and all other festivals, enjoying a successful season despite being relocated.

"The venue may change [for Atlanta Pride], but that will not at all change the spirit," she said.

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Gay families seek tolerance from ATL mega-church

Soulforce targets Eddie Long as part of national campaign

By DYANA BAGBY
dbagby@sovo.com

Bishop Eddie Long, leader of New Missionary Baptist Church in the Atlanta suburb of Lithonia, is among the mega-church leaders who Soulforce and gay families hope to engage in dialogue about spiritual acceptance.

In 2004, Long led a march through downtown Atlanta that drew 20,000 to support an agenda that included banning gays from marriage.

Soulforce, a national non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating anti-gay rhetoric in all religions, plans to take gay and straight families to share their stories with a new generation of church leaders, said Jeff Lutes, executive director of Soulforce and father of three with his partner of 10 years.

In 2007, anti-gay preachers Jerry Falwell and D.J. Kennedy died, while James Dobson and Pat Robertson, still heavy-hitters among evangelicals, are older now, Lutes said. As older leaders fade out, Lutes said there is a "new crop of emerging evangelical leaders" he hopes will be more open to listening to gay families.

In addition to Long, other nationally renowned mega-church leaders asked to participate in discussions are: Rev. Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston; Bishop T.D. Jakes of The Potter's House in Dallas; Bishop Harry Jackson Jr. of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Md.; Rev. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Ill.; and Dr. Rick Warren of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif.

New Birth Missionary Baptist Church did not return a call for comment by press time.

Rev. Dr. Ken Samuel, pastor of the 5,000-plus member Victory Church in Atlanta, planned to be a clergy leader on the national campaign, along with Rev. Jay Bakker, son of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker.

In a Jan. 9 press release from Soulforce announcing its "An American Outing" initiative, Samuel was quoted saying, "Homophobia and heterosexism directly contradict the principles of equality and justice for all God's children, and I think that the younger generation of evangelicals are beginning more and more to see this contradiction."

However, Samuel said Jan. 15 he has decided not to participate because he said he believes pastors have the right to believe as they wish.

Samuel's church has been picketed by the Westboro Baptist Church, which is led by Rev. Fred Phelps and known for its "God Hates Fags" mantra. Samuel said this week he didn't feel he could violate another pastor's space as was done to him by someone who disagreed with his beliefs.

"I cannot in good faith do something similar," Samuel said. "The best way to combat bigotry is from the pulpit, to educate the members themselves. It's rather intrusive for a pastor to come onto another pastor's sacred space."

If Phelps had asked Samuel to sit down and talk, Samuel acknowledged he would have said no.

And while he supports Soulforce's mission, Samuel said he believes "intruding" on another's sacred space can be counter-productive. "I respect Soulforce for raising the issue. My prayer is the members take this message back to their pastors and tell them how their messages are impacting them," he said.

Paige Schilt, spokesperson for Soulforce, said the organization respects Samuel's decision, but there are no planned protests at any of the churches.

"We are hoping for dialogue. We have no intention of protesting," she said.

Soulforce's similar Equality Ride, which took young people on bus tours across the country to talk to students and administrators at Christian colleges, was often met with police blocking the Soulforce riders from walking onto the campuses. When some riders ignored the police in acts of civil disobedience, they were arrested.

Lutes said, as with the Equality Rides, Soulforce has sent letters to the churches asking to meet with leaders and congregants.

"We've written 100 letters to these six churches and several dozen to Bishop Eddie Long's church," he said, adding the group hopes to meet with Long and his congregation June 1.

Gay families hope to speak about religious tolerance with anti-gay church leaders including Georgia's Bishop **Eddie Long**. (Photo by AP)

The "An American Outing" campaign is slated to take place at all the churches between Mother's Day and Father's Day.

Lutes said Long, as well as Jackson of Maryland, are specifically targeted because they appear to represent the "more traditional old guard" of evangelical leaders with their vocal anti-gay stances.

"We want to meet family to family," Lutes said.

Joining Soulforce in the campaign are the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, the National Black Justice Coalition and COLAGE.

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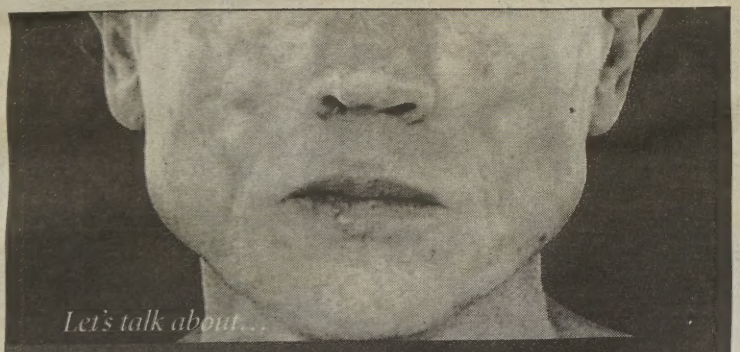
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Police: Midtown robberies on the rise

CRIME, continued from Page 1

"I think anybody can be susceptible," Mock said. "I think the perpetrators are somewhere close here tonight, you know, plotting and planning their next crime. You can be the victim if you're not aware of your surroundings."

Mock didn't mention that "crime is down in every category" in Midtown, which he mistakenly claimed in an interview after the meeting. He did have canisters of pepper-spray for sale for $25 each, and as the MPSA members scurried to write their checks, they asked a host of questions like the one posed by the young boy.

Some seemed disappointed when Mock, responding to an adult's question, told them panhandlers weren't fair game.

ROBBERIES INCREASE

The worries of MPSA members are not unfounded. Crime in Midtown is real, as are the MPSA's efforts to make the neighborhood safer.

The Jan. 14 meeting at Mary Mac's Tea Room took place a day after, and a block away from, an armed apartment invasion that left one person dead and police wondering whether the shooting was related to the copious amounts of marijuana being grown inside the apartment.

According to the Atlanta Police Department's most recent crime statistics, the number of both robberies and burglaries reported in APD Zone 5 rose in September, October and November 2007 when compared with the same time period in 2006.

A total of 193 robberies were reported during the three-month period in 2007, compared to the 140 reported in 2006, about a 40 percent increase. The robberies reported from September-November 2007 also outpaced the 164 robberies reported in the three preceding months, which were more than the 141 robberies reported from June-August 2006.

Burglaries in Midtown were up 28 percent in September-November 2007, with 201 burglaries reported compared to the 162 reported during the same time in 2006.

The number of homicides, aggravated assaults and car thefts in Midtown were all down during the last few months of 2007 compared to the year before, while reports of larceny increased sporadically.

"There's a lot of crime on Myrtle Street, especially on North Myrtle — there have been car break-ins," said Dana Persons, a Midtown resident who is part of a Yahoo-facilitated neighborhood watch that hopes to canvass Midtown warning residents to be aware.

The group targeted alleys and an abandoned house during its first outing Jan. 11, and plans to engage the owners and patrons of gay establishments like Blake's on the Park and Gilbert's.

"We really need to get them involved," Persons said. "There's a lot of really good pickings if you're a robber — there's a lot of people with money and a lot of people having a good time — and some that are coming out of those establishments, so we feel that those establishments really need to get involved."

Blake's employees have also noticed an increase in crime, and are relieved more is being done to address the problem.

"It's about time somebody did something," said Blake's bartender Brent Amdahl.

The city government's "No. 1 priority" is filling about 300 vacancies in the Atlanta Police Department, according to City Councilmember Anne Fauver, who is openly gay and represents Midtown.

"My take is that Midtown has the best coordinated effort [to fight crime] ... so in the main, Midtown is better secured than any place else," Fauver said.

HEAVY-HANDED STRATEGIES?

The MPSA and other neighborhood groups go to great lengths to improve the quality of life in Midtown — from organized street cleanings, to collecting $3,500 a year to hire off-duty police officers as security. But the groups often operate with the cultural sensitivity of John Rocker after a few tequila shots, denouncing people outside of their mostly white, affluent membership.

Neighborhood group leaders have a habit of moving next to well established gay clubs and then complaining about noise and crime until the clubs are forced to close. The members seem to use the most pejorative descriptors available — "bum," "gang," "infestation" — and even make up new ones like "transvestitutes," which they use to describe transgender prostitutes.

They also videotape the alleged prostitutes and post them on YouTube.

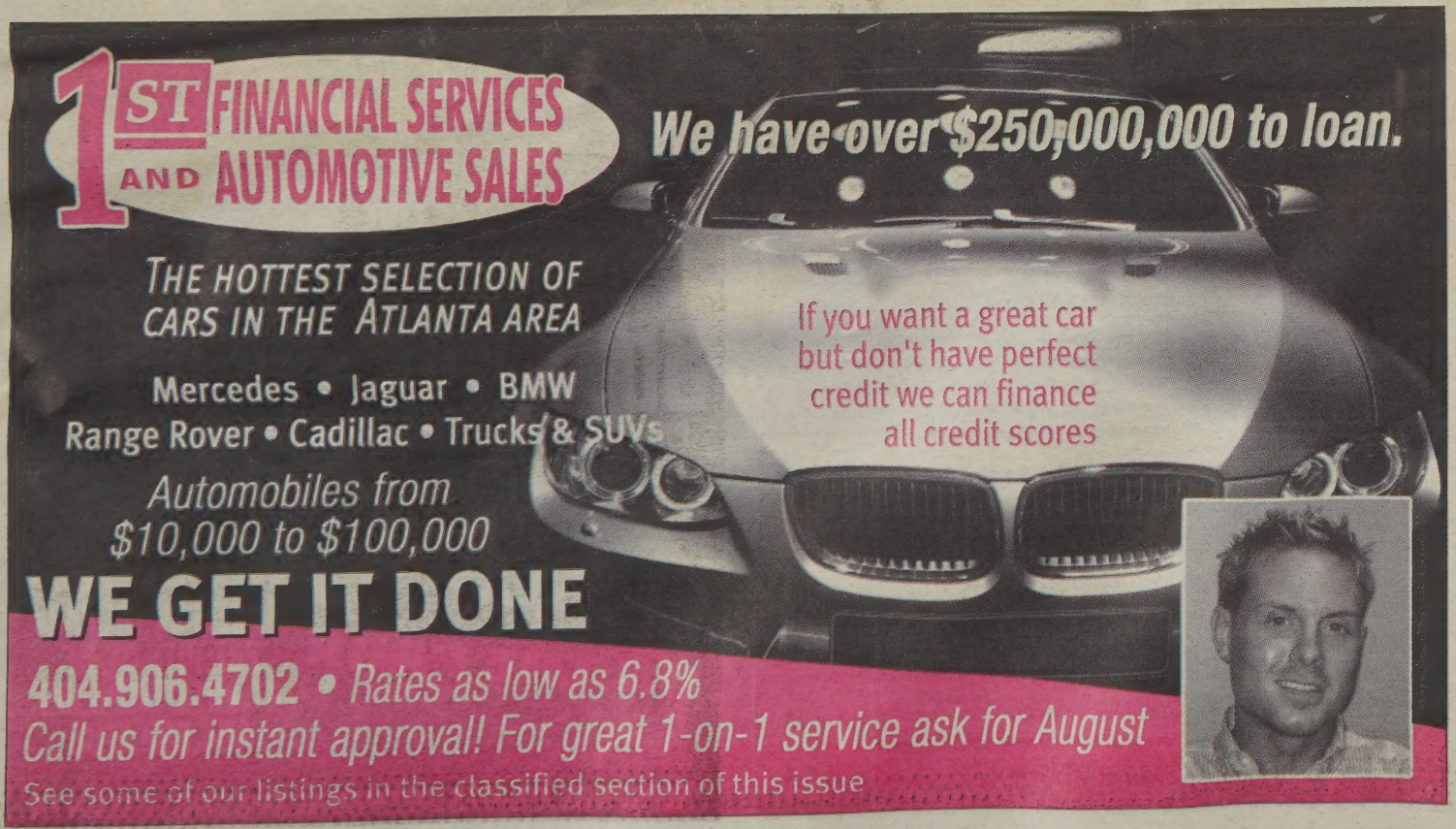
Gay City Councilmember **Anne Fauver** is worried about increases in Midtown crime. (Photo by Sher Pruitt)

In one message posted to the Yahoo Midtown safety group, Persons described a group of young black men in Piedmont Park as a "gang."

"I thought they were workers taking a break for lunch, but they just kept multiplying," Persons wrote.

Another message explained how neighbors called the police on a young black man and white woman who were waiting inside a car in front of a house.

"The people in the car turned out to be two workers in a nearby business on 10th," the message stated.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SO VO NEWS BRIEFS

Former Cobb Commission chair seeks office again

Former Cobb County Commissioner Bill Byrne, a key proponent of the county's 1993 resolution that condemned gay people as "incompatible with Cobb community standards," is seeking to regain the chairperson post.

Byrne was in his first year as Cobb County Commission chairperson when the commission passed the inflammatory resolution that caused a serious backlash from gay rights activists in Georgia and across the nation. The resulting "Olympics Out of Cobb" campaign eventually spurred the Atlanta Olympic Committee to cut Cobb County venues from being used for the 1996 games.

Byrne supported the resolution in a 3-to-1 vote, putting the Atlanta suburb on the map as the nation's first local government to condemn homosexuality as incompatible with family values.

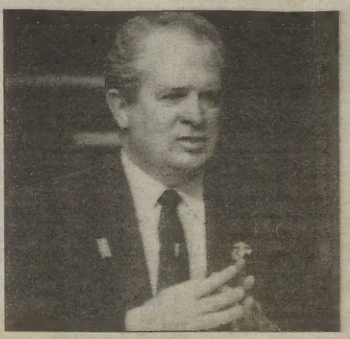
Byrne took out a full-page ad in the Marietta Daily Journal Jan. 6 announcing his candidacy against current Cobb County chairperson Sam Olens. The two face off July 15 in the state GOP primary, although more candidates are likely, according to the Marietta newspaper.

Byrne was not reached by press time.

Byrne was Cobb Commissioner from 1993-2002 before he resigned to run for governor, facing Sonny Perdue and former State Schools Superintendent Linda Schrenko in the August 2002 Republican primary. He finished third.

Olens was elected as Cobb County Commission chair after Byrne resigned in 2002.

Byrne has a daughter who is a lesbian and was outspoken against her father's support and implementation of the 1993 anti-gay resolution.



Former Cobb County Commissioner Chair Bill Byrne, pictured here in 1994, seeks re-election to the county's top seat. (Photo by AP)

— Dyana Bagby

HEALTH

Drug-resistant staph infection spreading among gay men

SAN FRANCISCO — A drug-resistant strain of potentially deadly bacteria has moved from U.S. hospitals and is being transmitted among gay men during sex, researchers announced this week, according to Reuters. They said methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, is beginning to appear in San Francisco, Boston, New York and Los Angeles. "Once this reaches the general population, it will be truly unstoppable," Binh Diep, a researcher at the University of California, San Francisco, told Reuters. MRSA can cause life-threatening infections and can often be treated only with intravenous antibiotics. It killed about 19,000 Americans in 2005, most of them in hospitals, according to a report published in October in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

COURTS

Craig: Disorderly conduct law requires multiple victims

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Seeking to have his guilty plea in a bathroom sex sting erased, Idaho Sen. Larry Craig's attorneys argue in a new court filing that the underlying act wasn't criminal because it didn't involve multiple victims. An appeals brief filed last week contends that Minnesota's disorderly conduct law "requires that the conduct at issue have a tendency to alarm or anger 'others'" — underscoring the plural nature of the term. Besides attacking the law, Craig's legal team leans on the First Amendment with an argument that the hand signal allegedly used to communicate a desire to engage in sexual conduct would be constitutionally protected speech. Craig has said he will finish his term, which ends in January 2009.

GOVERNMENT

Nevada panel OKs domestic partner benefits

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — A panel that oversees the health insurance plan for Nevada's state employees voted to extend benefits to domestic partners, including those of the same sex, and their children. The Public Employees' Benefits Program board also voted last week to recommend to Gov. Jim Gibbons and the legislature that the state provide funding to extend a state-paid insurance subsidy to domestic partners and their children, at a cost of about $3 million a year. The expansion of the health care plan to cover domestic partners is not expected to take effect until the 2009-10 fiscal year.

From staff and wire reports

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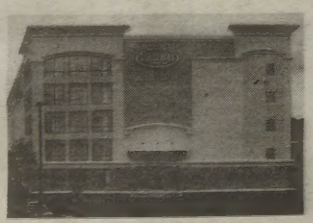
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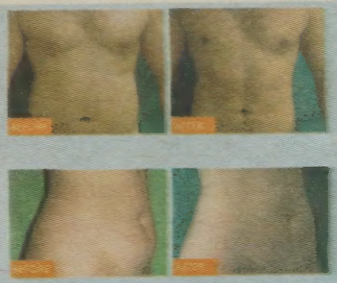

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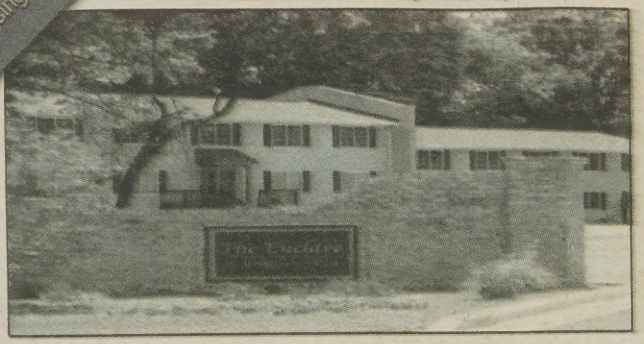

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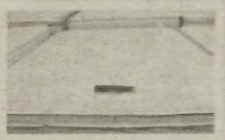

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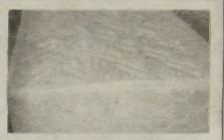

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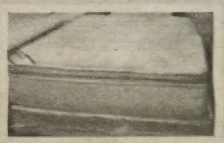

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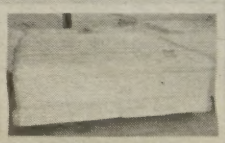

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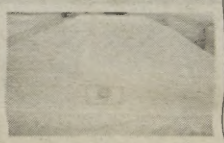

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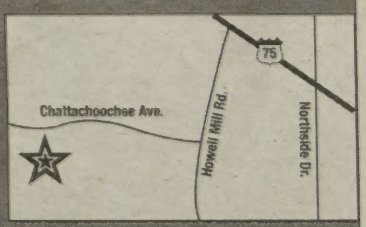


OPEN MONDAY - SATURDAY 10-6 • SUNDAY 12-6

Democrats' gay problem

Embarrassing e-mails reveal what DNC really thinks of gay media — and voters

By KEVIN NAFF

LAST WEEK BROUGHT ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF the consequences of gay rights advocates aligning themselves too closely with one political party.

E-mails written by senior staff members of the Democratic National Committee were leaked to the Queerty blog that exposed what they really think of the gay media, notably the Washington Blade, a sister publication to Southern Voice.

In the e-mails, the staff debates whether to give lesbian columnist Deb Price access to Howard Dean for an interview. They decide it would be too risky and expose the DNC to too many "hits."

In another exchange, they complain about the Blade's coverage of the DNC. Spokesperson Damien LaVera writes it is "outrageous" that the Blade didn't adequately cover the DNC's gay delegate training program. To get back at the Blade for this slight, DNC communications director Karen Finney suggests handing an exclusive story to the Advocate or another Blade competitor. Deputy finance director Julie Tagen then adds that she uses the Blade and other gay newspapers for "the bottom of the birdcage."

The reality is that the Blade has covered the DNC and its delegate training program. In addition to two news stories on the subject in the past year, I personally extended an invitation to the DNC to draft an op-ed on its program, which I later published.

The "birdcage" e-mail was leaked from a batch of documents subpoenaed in a lawsuit filed by former DNC gay outreach director Donald Hitchcock. In the lawsuit, Hitchcock says he was the target of discrimination, retaliation and defamation during and after his tenure as director of the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Council. Hitchcock was fired in May 2006, just days after his domestic partner, Paul Yandura, a longtime party activist, criticized DNC Chair Howard Dean in an open letter to gay Democrats.

"For many months, a number of us have made appeals to Howard Dean and party officials to care about and defend the dignity of gay and lesbian families and friends, in the same way they defend the dignity of other key constituencies," Yandura said in his letter.

"All progressives need to be asking how much has the DNC budgeted to counter the anti-gay ballot initiatives in the states," he said. "We also need to know why the DNC and our Democratic leaders continue to allow the Republicans to use our families and friends as pawns to win elections."

But the line that certainly doomed Hitchcock was: "My advice is don't give any more money to the Dems."

Less than a week later, Hitchcock was gone. Don't mess with the Democrats' lock on gay money.

In a less-than-convincing statement released after Hitchcock's dismissal, Finney said, "It was not retaliation. It was decided we needed a change. We decided to hire a proven leader."

Yandura, of course, saw it differently.

"This is retaliation, plain and simple," he said. "This shows what they think about domestic partners."

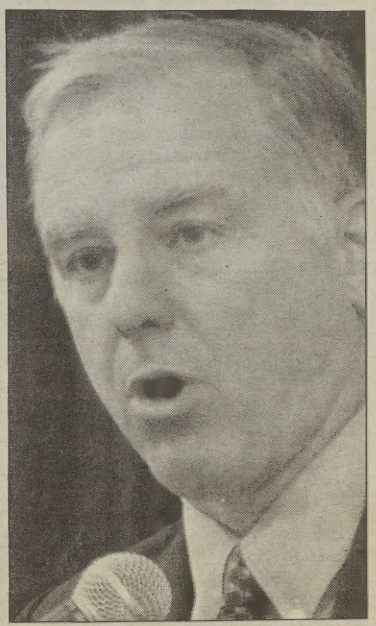
IT PROBABLY SHOWS WHAT THE DNC THINKS OF gay money, more than what it thinks of domestic partners. In any case, we now know what DNC officials think of the gay media. LaVera, in particular, is perturbed that the Blade publishes statements from anonymous sources. The party's treatment of Hitchcock and this e-mail exchange demonstrate why we allow certain trusted sources to speak anonymously: whistleblowers at the DNC clearly are justified in fearing for their jobs if they dare to criticize Dean or the party.

As for Tagen, who penned the very clever and original "birdcage" line, I won't go so far as to demand her resignation, as at least one gay activist did.

"If a DNC staffer disparaged black, Latino, or Jewish media the way Deputy Finance Director Julie Tagen did LGBT media, that person would already be out of a job," wrote Lee Bolin, a former member of the National Stonewall Democrats executive committee.

My skin is a tad thicker; I'm not losing sleep over Tagen's assessment of the Blade. Her remark, however, was unfortunate in that it cavalierly dismisses the hard work of a dedicated group of journalists working for a newspaper that is hardly hostile to the Democratic Party. We strive to cover the news in a fair way, but certainly Democratic voices are more than fairly represented in our pages.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE DNC, THIS FLAP over the gay media is just the beginning of the embarrassment. Not only are DNC employees' e-mails being made public, but there are the gleeful New York Post headlines to endure ("Gays sticking it to Dems"). It's unfathomable that the DNC hasn't settled this lawsuit.



DNC Chair **Howard Dean**, who fired gay outreach director Donald Hitchcock in 2006, is likely in for more embarrassing revelations thanks to a lawsuit that is exposing just what the DNC thinks its all-too-loyal gay constituency. (AP Photo)

And it serves as a reminder of what happens when one party knows it can count on the support of a constituency group, no matter what. When Democrats like John Kerry and 2004 running mate John Edwards announce support for anti-gay state marriage amendments and gays line up dutifully behind them anyway, we teach the party that there are no repercussions for betraying us.

This doesn't mean gay voters should pull the lever for any of the Republicans now in the running. Rather, gay voters, donors and campaign staffers need to learn the art of the barter system: you give something, you get something. No one knows that concept better than the evangelical Christians. When they stay home in November and a Democrat wins the White House, you better believe the GOP will take them more seriously in 2012. It's time for gays to demand more for their contributions to the Democratic Party.

Kevin Naff is editor of the Washington Blade, a newspaper affiliated with Southern Voice, and can be reached at knaff@washblade.com.

LEAD

"Ellen DeGeneres tops Oprah." No, it's not the title of what would surely be the best-selling lesbian porno of all time. Instead, Reuters was reporting this week on a Harris Poll ranking Americans' favorite television stars. Also interesting: The poll says single women chose Ellen as their fave, while married women liked Oprah. Read into that what you will, but Ellen's super-stardom can only **LEAD** to greater acceptance and visibility for lesbians.

Ellen on top. (AP Photo)

FOLLOW

What's the best thing for aspiring attorneys to eat before retaking the Massachusetts Bar Exam? Apparently, it's crow — at least if you're Stephen Dunne, who last year filed a federal lawsuit claiming he should not have failed the bar for refusing to answer a question about gay marriage, which is legal in the state. Dunne, who plans to retake the bar exam in February, recently e-mailed the Boston gay newspaper Bay Windows apologizing for his actions that "perpetuated intolerance." Hopefully more public bigots will **FOLLOW** his example.

GET OUT OF THE WAY

GOP presidential candidate Mike Huckabee is no fan of separation of church and state, explaining why he wants a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage: "That's what we need to do — is to amend the Constitution so it's in God's standards rather than try to change God's standards so it lines up with some contemporary view of how we treat each other and how we treat the family," Huckabee told a Michigan audience, according to Salon. Luckily, our country remains a democracy — not the theocracy Huckabee wants — so on Feb. 5, Georgians who vote Republican will have their chance to tell Huckabee to **GET OUT OF THE WAY.**

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soap box

SOUTHERN VOICE SOVO

I READ SOMEWHERE THAT IN THE NEXT TEN YEARS, PEOPLE WILL BE HAVING SEX WITH ROBOTS!
JUST WHAT THE MOVEMENT NEEDS— TO ADD YET ANOTHER LETTER TO LGBTTQIQQA!
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To read the articles that inspired these comments from readers, or to submit your own comments on the gay issues of the day, visit **www.sovo.com** and click **Sound Off**.

Pride won't be the same without Piedmont Park

Re: "Pride out of Piedmont Park" (news, Jan. 11)

Absolutely it matters where Pride will be held! This year marks my 10th anniversary as part of Atlanta Gay Pride Weekend and I for one am disappointed about the changes we will have to make. "Same ol', same ol'" is what most of us keep coming back for year after year. The feelings of home are what the days at the park are to me. Just sitting on the greens and listening to the music and watching all the colorful people, young and old, is a tradition and with the mass of people we bring together, there is no other venue that can be a better alternative than Piedmont Park. This year I will be making NYC my alternative.

It is sad that the drought has affected Pride this way. Piedmont Park is truly the only place to have it. People from all around come to Atlanta. I hope that this displacement is temporary and when the park can support us we will return in 2009.

Edwards, not Clinton or Obama, best for gay voters

Re: "Presidential campaigns target gay Ga. voters" (news, Jan. 18)

I think the egotism of the Georgia gay leaders is very quaint — just because Obama and Clinton's campaigns personally reached out to them, they are supporting them. (Great marketing move, Obama and Clinton.) No one seems to remember the ex-gay gospel singer from South Carolina who acted as an official spokesperson for Obama's campaign. And could Hillary be more "in the closet," as it were, regarding her support for our rights? Aside from their lack of serious focus on gay issues, these two candidates are not addressing any other significant issues; the U.S. needs more than vague promises of change. John Edwards is addressing serious issues, namely poverty and health care (which, by the way, are very serious and affect the gay community as directly as any other American community). Also, Elizabeth Edwards has come out in full support of marriage equality, which is symbolically significant. To conclude, people should vote on issues, not star power.

U.S. men are immature about circumcision

Re: "Data split on benefits of circumcision" (news, Jan. 4)

How immature the men in the article are acting about uncircumcised penises. Nothing on the human body resembles an elephant. Why don't they grow up and stop acting so immature. Most men in European countries are not circumcised. There is nothing at all wrong with leaving the member intact. And if a child can be taught to bathe himself by himself he can be taught by his parent how to properly care for his foreskin.

Keep it clean and there's no reason to get it clipped.

Another study, by Mor et al., found no effect of circumcision on HIV in heterosexual men either. The three unblinded African studies by circumcision advocates have many problems, such as drop-out rates several times higher than the sero-conversion rates, and men seroconverting who reported no sexual activity or only with condoms (suggesting infection by injection). It's time to say the Emperor has no clothes and circumcision doesn't significantly prevent HIV.

Reality series could help Cher get closer to Chastity

Re: "Cher and Chastity may be on TV" (Dish, Jan. 4)

I think Cher and her daughter having their own show would make them become closer to each other, and really get Chastity's views on her lifestyle. I can't wait to see Cher, hopefully on a daily show such as The View.

Fight over trans-inclusive ENDA gives Dems a pass

Re: "Kennedy favors '08 Senate vote on ENDA" (news, Jan. 11)

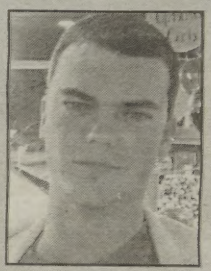
My guess is that the Senate doesn't care one way or the other if they get a "T"-less ENDA bill or they don't. If it comes to the floor, they can probably muster the 60 votes and pass it. If it gets shelved, then the conservative Dems get a pass and they are even happier. My guess is that they are secretly cheering for the trans community to keep it bottled up.

The House of Representatives passed a resolution supporting Christmas by a vote 372-9. Nine votes against Christmas! That's two more than the seven Representatives who voted with "United ENDA" to oppose gay rights advances unless the transgendered are included. United ENDA — less political support than voting against Christmas. Sheeesh!

ENDA without transgender protection is akin to a civil rights bill that only protects the "light skinned" Negroes. When is the GLBT community going to unite and demand an end to all discrimination? The T is here to stay, and we will not be excluded from anything. If the straight-appearing/straight-acting gays don't want to include themselves in the GLBT movement, let them start their own. John Wayne Gacy would have loved it. Maybe they can get Sen. Craig to be their spokesperson.

THE Q

What do you think of Pride moving out of Piedmont Park?

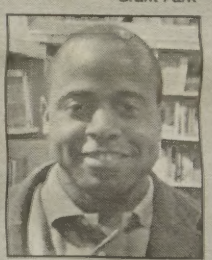


I think the atmosphere would be changed because obviously the space in the park is bigger. I'm not sure why it's being moved. I'm not sure what Pride has to do with the drought.

Todd Whitfield, 26
Marietta

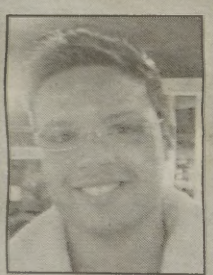
I think it would definitely affect people coming. Piedmont Park is a meeting place; it kind of gives people security. With the parking situation, you might have to pay more money, and that would discourage people. It's taking way from the Pride culture.

Alex Bodkin, 22
Grant Park



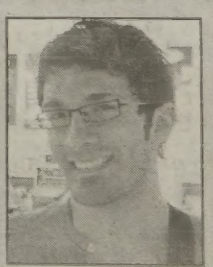
Pride has been so linked with Piedmont Park. The Civic Center seems like *more of a convention* than a Pride festival in the summer. At the Civic Center, it could be like a conference for a science society.

Wilson Vincent, 30
Decatur



I think it's going to be really unfortunate. There's not going to be a space that's big and as convenient. It won't be as successful as it's starting to get. I think it's going to be a step back, bringing it back a few years.

Lee Jimenez, 22
Buckhead



I think the first solution would be to find another venue for it to be outdoor, like Stone Mountain Park, and I think a lot of people would travel to go. The convenience will be less than normal but I think people will still travel to support Atlanta and the gay community.

Ritchie Vargas, 22
Decatur

Compiled by Rob Beck

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I represent many buyers and sellers and specialize in Midtown properties.

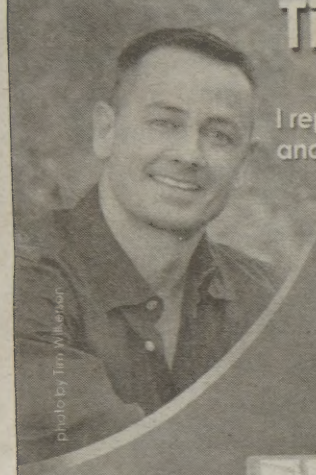
Photo by Tim Wilkerson

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SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

SUNDAY, JAN. 20

The Armorettes celebrate their 29th anniversary with a special show and check presentation to two area AIDS organizations. 7:30 p.m. at Burkhart's, 1492-F Piedmont Ave. 404-872-4403, www.burkharts.com

TUESDAY, JAN. 22

The Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce presents a **Business Builder Lunch.** 11:55 a.m.–1:10 p.m. at Rock Bottom Brewery, 3242 Peachtree Road. NE. www.atlantagaychamber.org

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 23

The Atlanta-Fulton Public Library hosts the second in its series of LGBT history events, this one honoring the contributions of **Winston Johnson** to civil rights, with black gay Civil Rights activist Bayard Rustin's surviving partner in attendance. Reception following at Radial Cafe. LGBT history: 7 p.m. at the Auditorium of the Central Library, 1 Margaret Mitchell Square. Reception: 9 p.m. at Radial, 1530 DeKalb Ave.

Kristen Bernert of the WNBA speaks at this month's meeting of the gay Atlanta Executive Network. 5:45 p.m. at the Atlanta Marriott Suites Midtown, 35 14th St. NE. www.aen.org

FRIDAY, JAN. 25

The AGLCC presents its monthly **Fourth Friday Networking** event. 5:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m. at Paris on Ponce, 716 Ponce de Leon Place NE. www.atlantagaychamber.org

SUNDAY, JAN. 27

Tickets go on sale to the general public for **'Avenue Q,'** the naughtiest puppet musical ever, coming to the Fox Theatre in March. Discounted tickets benefiting AIDS Survival Project available prior to general public on-sale date and through March 25. www.aidssurvivalproject.org, www.ticketmaster.com

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit **www.sovo.com.**

TO ADD A LISTING...
e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Rob Beck. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

The once and future queens

Atlanta's reigning fundraising troupe celebrates 29 years

By ROB BECK
rbeck@sovo.com

Current and former Armorettes, including **Grady Jenkins** as Rosie Delight (center) and the troupe's current public face, **Mary Edith Pitts** (second from right), take the stage in 1998. (Photo courtesy Grady Jenkins)

SOMETIMES IT CAN BE HARD TO BELIEVE THAT The Armorettes, a group of men who originally put on dresses to cheerlead for a bar softball team, are not only still around 29 years later, but have grown to be among the city's largest fundraisers for HIV/AIDS causes.

Even Grady Jenkins, who was present for 17 of those years as popular Armorette Rosie Delight, is often amazed by the way the group has grown.

"I was thinking just how the group really started as cheerleaders for the Armory softball team, and later cheering for the Falcons games at parties," says Jenkins, who is set to reprise Delight at the Armorettes' 29th anniversary party on Jan. 20 at Burkhart's. "It grew from that to support a great need."

And support a great need they did. Over the Armorettes' nearly three decades of fundraising efforts, Mary Edith Pitts, a.k.a. Richard Cherry, the group's current public face, reports they have raised approximately $1.7 million. Though that's not a sum to be trifled with, Pitts says she is not surprised by the group's success, given its tendency to evolve.

"The Armorettes have been successful fund raisers in the community for such a long time because we continue to reinvent ourselves as well as our fundraising methods," says Pitts, who was a frequent guest performer for five years before officially joining the group in 1996.

She also says it's a matter of dedication, which has been in no short supply since the group's inception.

"The Armorettes are a legacy of service," she says. "Over 29 years, each member of the troupe, from the original cast of seven to the current cast, has dedicated a part of his or her life to serving causes in the gay and lesbian community. Raising money, awareness of issues, and providing a good time to anyone who would spend a Sunday night with us has kept people coming back week after week, year after year."

FANS AREN'T THE ONLY ONES WHO APPRECIATE what the Armorettes do.

"We've had a very successful relationship with them," says Daniel Belware, donor relations manager for Jerusalem House. The HIV/AIDS housing organization has received funding from the Armorettes since 1992.

"They are definitely one of our largest and longest-running community groups, and we are absolutely thrilled at their commitment to supporting people living with AIDS in Atlanta," Belware says.

Pitts says part of the reason the Armorettes' fans are so generous with their hard-earned cash, which in turns allows the Armorettes to turn over such large gifts to local organizations, is because the group is so picky about where the money goes.

"We have agreements with our AIDS service organizations that 100 percent of our donation goes to providing services, never covering administrative costs," she says.

Belware says it's the spirit of the Armorettes' shows that helps loosen donors' purse strings.

"They're just fun events and everyone has a good time," he says, "and when people are having a good time, it just brings a lot of awareness to the cause and also is able to bring in a lot of money."

He also notes the commitment from the girls' home turf as being key to their success.

"Their venues have a lot to do with it because they receive a lot of support from where they perform," Belware says. "So we're also very grateful for gay spots in Atlanta, Burkhart's in particular, for their commitment as well."

Pitts and Jenkins say they have fun surprises in store for the troupe's 29th anniversary celebration, including the return of Jenkins' take on "Saturday Night Live" favorite the Church Lady. Pitts promises the emotional delivery of a pair of large checks to two local AIDS service organizations, and hopes to raise an additional $2,000 that night.

"Bring the tissues," she warns.

The Armorettes' 29th Anniversary
Jan. 20, 7:30 p.m.
Burkhart's
1492-F Piedmont Ave.
404-872-4403
www.burkharts.com

First MLK gay community breakfast held

SOVO FLASHBACK

Gay Atlantans joined in celebrating the 17th annual Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday on Monday, Jan. 21, 2002, marking the event by hosting a first-ever community breakfast before participating as a group in the annual Atlanta march in King's honor.

The Atlanta march marking King's birthday has included an organized gay and gay-friendly contingent for 15 years, according to Lynn Cothren, an openly gay personal assistant to Coretta Scott King, King's widow.

Gay participation in Atlanta MLK Day events began when protestors opposing the Cracker Barrel restaurant chain's firing of gay employees decided to join the civil rights march, Cothren said.

The first-ever "community brunch for LGBT marchers and allies" was scheduled "as a way of getting people together," said Craig Washington.

The brunch was hosted jointly by ZAMI, a black lesbian nonprofit group; Congregation Bet Haverim, a Reconstructionist synagogue founded for lesbians and gay men; and the gay and lesbian community center.

In recent years during MLK Weekend, the brunch has become a respected event and was named for Bayard Rustin, Martin Luther King Jr.'s gay adviser. This year, the brunch has been re-christened the "Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Community Breakfast" to also recognize the lesbian writer and activist.

Southern Voice, Jan. 11, 2002

Gay and lesbian activists have held a community brunch during MLK Weekend since 2002. (Photo by Bo Shell)

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE SPORTS

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, JAN. 18
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming and Water Polo Practice, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center. www.atlantarainbowtrout.com
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Recreational Open Play, Agnes Scott College. www.hotlantavolleyball.org
Friends Friday Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.friendsfriday.org

SATURDAY, JAN. 19
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Open Play Doubles, Glenlake Tennis Center. www.atta.org

SUNDAY, JAN. 20
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming and Water Polo Practice, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.
Atlanta Team Tennis Association, Sunday Morning Drills, Glenlake Tennis Center.
Lambda Bowling League, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=85

TUESDAY, JAN. 22
Atlanta Bucks Rugby Football Club, Practice, Sammye Coan Middle School. www.atlantabucksrugby.org
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming and Water Polo Practice, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.
Hotlanta Volleyball League, Intermediate and Advanced Open Play, Agnes Scott College.
Atlas Atlanta Bowling League, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=78

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 23
Decatur Women's League Bowling, *League Play, Suburban Lanes in Decatur. 404-210-4722, annebarr30345@gmail.com*
Hotlanta Soccer League, Winter Season Play, Silverbacks Park. www.hotlantasoccer.com

THURSDAY, JAN. 24
Atlanta Bucks Rugby Football Club, Practice, Sammye Coan Middle School.
Atlanta Rainbow Trout, Swimming Practice, Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.
Decatur Women's Basketball, League Play, Decatur High School Gym.

TO ADD A LISTING...
e-mail matt@gaytlsports.com or call 678-519-0543.

Pride's move impacts gay sports groups

Square dance marathon steps off this weekend

By MATT HENNIE

THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF THE CITY OF ATLANTA booting large-scale festivals from its parks, along with the threat of additional restrictions on the use of athletic fields, is being felt by several gay sports organizations.

The new restrictions, announced last week and brought on by the state's long-running drought, booted Atlanta Pride from Piedmont Park and the date of the event to July 4-6 rather than June 22-24. That's left a handful of sports groups scrambling to figure out if the events they hold during Atlanta Pride will move with the festival or stay scheduled for late June.

For Eileen Stone, who organizes the annual Best Ball golf tournament on the traditional Pride weekend, unrelenting heat during July may prompt her to hold the event earlier in June. The tournament raises about $2,000 for the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus and attracts about 50 participants.

"Golf in the summer time is brutal – it just gets so hot," Stone said. "If I'm not going to hook it to Pride, it makes sense to move it up earlier."

FRONT RUNNERS ATLANTA IS TAKING A WAIT and see approach. For 17 years, the gay running group has attracted hundreds of people to a 3.1-mile run and walk in Grant Park during Pride. While the event seems safe from the city's new park restrictions, organizers are concerned about moving it and competing with the Peachtree Road Race, held July 4, or going later into the summer, when temperatures could go even higher.

"We're still trying to figure it out," said Mike Spencer, the event's sponsorship director and a former president of the running group. "It takes months to put our run together."

Last June, the Atlanta Bucks Rugby Football Club held its first-ever Southern Fried 7's Rugby Tournament, which drew eight teams from as far away as Nashville and North Carolina. The club was planning to skip the event this year to make room on their schedule for the Rugby World Cup in mid-June. But because Pride hasa different date, the Bucks may reconsider hosting the tournament this year, according to Bullet Manale, the club's president.

"It's a possibility," Manale said. "We'll just have to see...We had a really good response for the tournament."

Other sports organizations — the National Flag Football League of Atlanta, Hotlanta Soccer Association and Hotlanta Softball League — could face problems if organized sports are banned from athletic fields in the parks, a move city officials said last week that they are considering. All three groups use fields at Piedmont.

"We are just holding our breath," said Thurman Williams, the president of the flag football league, which opens its spring season in March. "We're not really excluded and not really included in the city guidelines. We're not sure where we stand."

DANCING SQUARES Atlanta's vibrant gay dance scene steps into the spotlight this weekend with a three-day event from Hotlanta Squares. "Promenade Down Peachtree VI" is expected to draw about 120 dancers from across the Southeast for non-stop square dancing.

"It's a big social event," said Kent Tolleson, a Hotlanta Squares member who is organizing the event. "We don't compete for anything. A lot of the weekend is surrounded by socialization, food and dancing."

And dance they do – about 18 hours beginning Friday evening and running through Sunday afternoon, all for a $95 registration fee. The event leads into the group's open house on Jan. 28 and the start of a 12-week training session for gay men and lesbians who want to learn square dancing.

"This is our big deal weekend," Tolleson said.

Matt Hennie blogs on Atlanta's gay sports scene at www.gaytlsports.com.

Hotlanta Squares
'Promenade Down Peachtree VI'
Jan. 18-20
Horizons School
1900 DeKalb Ave., Atlanta, GA 303037
www.iagsdc.org/hotlanta

Front Runners Atlanta traditionally holds its popular Pride Run on the Saturday morning of Gay Pride weekend. (Photo by Sher Pruitt)

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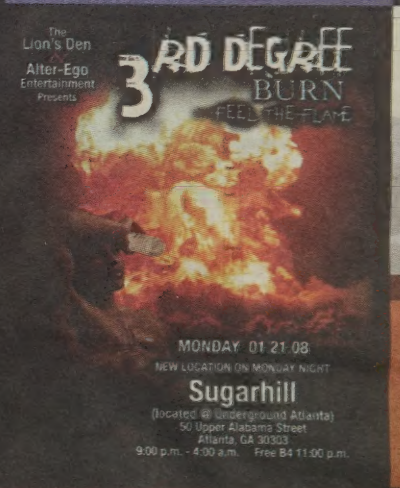
18 to party, 21 to drink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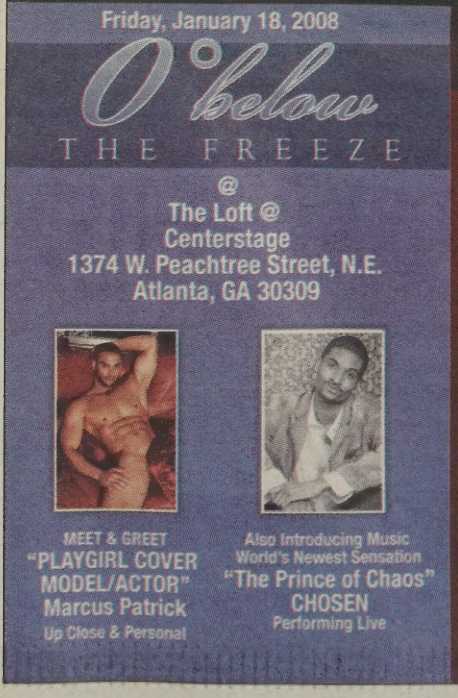
and MC Kevin (The Teady Bear)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3RD DEGREE
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MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 2008
NEW LOCATION ON MONDAY NIGHT
Sugarhill
(located @ Underground Atlanta)
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Atlanta, GA 30303
9:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m. Free B4 11:00 p.m.

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SOUTHERN VOICE

JAN. 18 - JAN. 27

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e-mail calendar@sovo.com, call 404-876-1819, ext. 23, or fax to 404-876-2709, attn: Rob Beck. Entries should be submitted at least 14 days in advance of publication date.

FRIDAY JAN. 18

Robert LeLeux reads from and signs **'Memoirs of a Beautiful Boy,'** his tale of growing up gay in Texas. 8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

Local drag legend **Raven** returns to Atlanta in the first of a series of monthly shows. 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. 404-745-9494, www.wetbaratlanta.com

PHOTO COURTESY SHANE V

THURSDAY JAN. 17

Sketchmonkey Productions continues its new weekly party series, **Rock Hard**, this time with **DJ Shane V** (pictured). 11 p.m. at Masquerade, 685 North Ave. www.myspace.com/garysalles

Gay-inclusive '70s band **Styx** rocks Atlanta. 9:30 p.m. at Wild Bill's, 2075 Market St., Duluth. 678-473-1000, www.wildbillsatlanta.com

Sparkle and be seen at **Twinkledome**, where the glitterati always feel at home. 9 p.m. at Star Bar, 437 Moreland Ave. NE. 404-681-9018, www.starbar.com

SATURDAY JAN. 19

Staying up late is easy when there's a master like DJ **Tony Moran** keeping the beats pumping at Fernando Jardim's new **'Carioca'** party. Late night at the Body Shop, 2675 Johnson Road. www.bodyshopatlanta.com

Rush the dance floor for the sounds of **DJ John Millier**. 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. 404-745-9494, www.wetbaratlanta.com

SUNDAY JAN. 20

The Armorettes mark 29 years of fun shows and raising money for local AIDS organizations. 7:30 p.m. at Burkhart's, 1492-F Piedmont Ave. 404-872-4403, www.burkharts.com

THURSDAY JAN. 24

Local playwright Steve Yockey's latest work **'Octopus,'** about the fallout from a night of sex for four men, takes the stage. Through Saturday, Feb. 23 at Actor's Express, 887 W Marietta St. NW. 404-607-SHOW, www.actors-express.com

Judith Hawkins-Tillirson, author of **'The Weiser Concise Guide to Herbal Magick,'** brings the secrets of plants aligned with love. 7:30 p.m. at Charis Books & More, 1189 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

Atlanta author **Mark King** reads from and signs his memoir, 'A Place Like This,' detailing his downward spiral in 1980s Hollywood. 8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

Sean Kagalis celebrates the release of his live CD with special guest **Jessica Dunnagan** at Southern Exposure. 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. at Blake's on the Park, 227 10th St. NE. 404-892-5786, www.blakesontheparkatlanta.com

FRIDAY JAN. 25

Enjoy the music of local up-and-coming artists at **Wordsmiths' open mic night**. 9 p.m. at Wordsmiths Books, 141 E Trinity Place, Decatur. 404-378-7166, www.wordsmithsbooks.com

SATURDAY JAN. 26

Get **'Liquified'** with **DJ Kazell.** 10 p.m. at WETbar, 960 Spring St. 404-745-9494, www.wetbaratlanta.com

SUNDAY JAN. 27

DJ Martin Fry headlines C2 Productions' tea dance. 6 p.m. – 12 a.m. at Opera, 1150-B Peachtree St. www.c2productions.biz

PHOTO BY COURTNEY TROUBLE

TUESDAY JAN. 22

Nicky Click brings her one-woman queer electro-pop sound, with special guests DaLyrical and Rita J. 9 p.m. at Eyedrum, 290 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Suite 8. 404-522-0655, www.eyedrum.org

MLK WEEKEND EVENTS

FRIDAY JAN. 18

Fire in the Smokies party. 8 p.m.-midnight at Metro Lanes & Games, 1959 Metropolitan Parkway. www.falltacular.com

The Glenn Twins Calendar release party and performance by **Fiona Simone**. 10 p.m. at Club Miami, 3011 Buford Highway. www.traxxgirls.com

Wassup 'N ATL presents the **Rock Hard Party**. 10 p.m. at Djangos, 495 Peachtree St. www.wassupnatl.com

Extreme Entertainment Events present the **Zero Below Party** featuring **Marcus Patrick** & **Chasen**. 10 p.m. at The Loft at Center Stage, 1374 W. Peachtree St. xtremeentertainmentevents.com

Trade Friday. 10 p.m. at Club Trademark, 91 Broad St.

SATURDAY JAN. 19

L.O.V.E. Coalition presents its **MLK Prayer Breakfast**. 10 a.m. at the Atlanta Central Library, 1 Margaret Mitchell Square. 404-272-8609

Meet authors **Lee Hayes** and **Dayne Avery**. 12:30 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Airport, 1325 Virginia Ave. www.nubianknights.com

Speak Fire spoken word event. 6:30-8 p.m.at House of IntegriTEA, 312-C N. Highland Ave. 404-377-3832, www.zami.org

Meet author **Frederick Smith**. 8 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. www.outwritebooks.com

Power 2008 Big 3-D Party. 9 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Airport, 1325 Virginia Ave.

Fantasia takes the stage for the boys. 10 p.m. at Traxx, 1287 Columbia Dr. www.traxxatlanta.com

Another Family Affair hosts **G.L.O.W. Saturday**. 10:30 p.m. at Club Trademark, 91 Broad St. www.anotherfamilyaffair.com

Fantasia sings for the ladies. 12 a.m. at Club Trademark, 91 Broad St. www.traxxgirls.com

Wussup 'N ATL presents **Magnum Saturday**. 10 p.m. at Club 708, 708 Spring St. wassupnatl.com

SUNDAY JAN. 20

Meet author **Mose Harding**. 12 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Airport, 1325 Virginia Ave. www.nubianknights.com

Meet porn star and author **Bobby Blake**. 4 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Atlanta Airport, 1325 Virginia Ave. www.nubianknights.com

Students of Color Organizing Conference (SOCO) roundtable discussion. 5:30-8 p.m. at Positive Impact, 139 Ralph McGill Blvd. www.glsen.org

Grown & Sexy Party. 8 p.m. at Django, 495 Peachtree St. www.wassupnatl.com

Melting Point Party. 10 p.m. at Club Europe, 4001 Presidential Parkway. www.xtremeentertainmentevents.com

Angie Stone takes the stage. 11 p.m. at Utopia Lounge, 840 Marietta St. www.invictusentertainmentgroup.com

MONDAY JAN. 21

Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Community Breakfast. 9 a.m. at Atlanta First United Methodist Church, 360 Peachtree St. www.craigwerks.com

MLK March. 12:45 p.m., gay contingency gathers at the corner of Peachtree and Ellis streets. www.craigwerks.com

WEDNESDAY JAN. 23

Walter Naegle, surviving partner of Civil Rights leader Bayard Rustin, speaks. 7 p.m. at Atlanta Central Library, 1 Margaret Mitchell Square.

JAN. 18 - FEB. 16, 2008

Visit **www.sovo.com** for expanded calendars and organization listings covering nightlife, sports, spirituality and health.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					18 **MLK Weekend** kicks off. **Raven** returns to Atlanta at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com **Robert LeLeux** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com	19 Fernando Jardim's Carioca with DJ Tony Moran. www.bodyshopatlanta.com **Frederick Smith** at Outwrite. www.outwritebooks.com
20 **Armorettes' 29th Anniversary Show** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com **'Jerusalem is Proud to Present'** at Atlanta Jewish Film Festival. atlantajewishfilm.org	21 **Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Bayard Rustin / Audre Lorde Breakfast.** 404-441-4827 **'The Intruder'** at the 14th Street Playhouse. www.14thstplayhouse.org	22 **Nicky Click** at Eyedrum. www.eyedrum.org AGLCC **Business Builder Lunch** at Rock Bottom Brewery. atlantagaychamber.org	23 **Kristen Bernert** speaks at AEN's monthly meeting. www.aen.org **Brainfreeze Trivia** at **Blake's.** blakesontheparkatlanta.com	24 **'Octopus'** opens at Actor's Express. www.actorsexpress.com **Judith Hawkins-Tillirson** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	25 **AGLCC's 4th Friday Networking.** www.atlantagaychamber.org **Open Mic Night** at Wordsmiths Books. wordsmithsbooks.com	26 **The Mary Edith Pitts Show** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com Liquified with DJ Kazell at WETbar. wetbaratlanta.com
27 Tickets go on sale for **'Avenue Q'** at the Fox. www.foxtheatre.org **DJ Martin Fry** at Opera. www.c2productions.biz	28 **Matchbox Twenty** at Phillips Arena. www.ticketmaster.com **Young Women Writers and Writing with Intent** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	29 Author **Jennifer Finney Boylan** at the Margaret Mitchell House. www.gwtw.org **Big Gay Supper Club** at Steel. www.biggaysupperclub.com	30 **Brainfreeze Trivia** at **Blake's.** blakesontheparkatlanta.com	31 Coloring Mandalas with **Susan Fincher** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com Scott Turner Schofield's **'Becoming a Man in 127 Easy Steps'** opens at 7 Stages. www.7stages.org	**FEB. 1** **Boys' Room** with Stewart at Mary's. marysatlanta.com **DJ Cody Nation** at Rock Hard at Masquerade. myspace.com/garysalles	2 **DJ Coqui** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com **Southeast Leather Fest's SELF-Indulgence.** -www.seleatherfest.com
3 **Amsterdames** at Amsterdam. amsterdam-atlanta.com	4 **Mix-It-Up with Mary Edith Pitts** at Burkhart's. www.burkharts.com	5 **Georgia Presidential Primary** and **Watch Party at Amsterdam.** www.atlantastonewall.org	6 **Boys Night Out Dress Code Party** at Heretic. www.hereticatlanta.com	7 **Ellis Avery** at Charis Books & More. charisbooksandmore.com	8 **Ellis Avery** and **Sharon Marcus** at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse. www.outwritebooks.com	9 **Stage Door Dives** at the Stage Door. www.thestagedoor.biz
10 **Big Time Drag Revue** at Blake's. blakesontheparkatlanta.com	11 **Young Women Writers and Writing with Intent** at Charis. charisbooksandmore.com	12 Georgia Equality's **'Throw a Party for a Fair Majority.'** www.georgiaequality.org	13 **Exploring Genders through Reading.** charisbooksandmore.com	14 **Valentine's Day**	15 Benefit at **Lenny's Bar.** www.lennysbar.com	16 **Deborah Cox** at WETbar. www.wetbaratlanta.com

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'PROUD TO PRESENT'

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival screens story of Jerusalem's World Pride

By ROB BECK
rbeck@sovo.com

THE ATLANTA JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL IS IN THE MIDST OF ITS eighth year presenting films "examining Jewish life, culture and history," according to festival organizers.

Among the more than 40 films over 12 days included in this year's festival, running through Jan. 27 at multiple venues, is "Jerusalem Is Proud to Present," an Israeli film documenting the struggle between conservative religious groups and the planners of the annual World Pride celebration, which was held in Jerusalem in 2006.

AJFF selection committee member Eric Miller says that though there is always a gay portion of the festival's program, the committee has never felt the need to actively search out gay films. Rather, they are an organic part of the overall selection process.

"They rely on trade magazines, they rely on what other film festivals are showing, and they get submissions from filmmakers," Miller says. "They haven't had to actively look for a gay movie ... but there's a bottom line. It has to be a good movie."

It's a bottom line that "Jerusalem" finishes well beyond. Director Nitzan Gilady exhibits deft skill in crafting an engrossing tale documenting the efforts of Jerusalem's Open House, the city's gay resource center, to plan the 2006 World Pride celebration in the face of fierce religious opposition.

The story centers on the struggle to hold a parade as part of the festivities, and the efforts of Orthodox Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders to prevent what they call "the homosexualization of the Middle East."

Please see **FILM FEST** on **Page 32**

Angie Stone, Page 25 • 'Octopus,' Page 26 • Mark King, Page 28 • Q Puzzle, Page 37

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Angie, our ally

Soul diva performs at gay club for MLK

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

Angie Stone visits gay Atlanta's MLK Day celebration. (Photo courtesy Invictus Entertainment)

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A DECADE SINCE ANGIE Stone began uplifting audiences with her songs about self love and perseverance, a theme she brings to Atlanta for a Jan. 20 performance at the Utopia Lounge. The concert, produced by the Invictus Entertainment Group, is part of the gay festivities planned for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday weekend (**See full MLK calendar, Page 21**).

The Grammy-nominated neo soul artist chatted with Southern Voice before her first trip to Atlanta during MLK weekend, and shared her affinity for gay people who strive to live life authentically.

Stone had to battle rumors in 2002 that she didn't consider gay men to be "real men" — an accusation Stone says hurt her because gay men have always played such an important part of her life and career.

Several of Stone's assistants are gay, and a gay songwriter penned her most successful single to-date, "Wish I Didn't Miss You Anymore" on 2002's "Mahogany Soul."

As she readies for her performance at Utopia Lounge, Stone chats about spending MLK Weekend in Atlanta, the difference between gay and straight crowds, and the only girl she's ever kissed.

***Southern Voice:* When you think of Atlanta, what are some of the first things that come to mind?**

Angie Stone: I love Atlanta because it's a lot of freedom here. In my opinion, I think it's very, very full of a lot of black-owned businesses and a lot of positive energy in terms of bettering yourself.

Have you ever heard of a city celebrating MLK weekend like we do in Atlanta?

Absolutely not, and I'm excited. This is my first time going, and I've heard nothing but great things about it.

Is there a difference in singing for a mostly straight crowd versus performing at a gay club?

I think the energy is more genuine in the gay crowd. I think everyone has a genuine love for good music, and they're positive and very supportive in terms of what they love.

Are there any people or moments in your life that influenced your views toward gay folks and gay fans?

One of my assistants is gay, and he's one of the hardest working, most loyal cats I know in the world. He's a very genuine, genuine friend, and I've had nothing but very genuine relationships with the people who are gay in my life.

Have you ever kissed a girl or had any curiosities?

Nope, never kissed a girl other than my daughter. I don't have a desire to be gay or be a lesbian. I really don't pass judgment on anybody that chooses that lifestyle, but that's not for me. I am strictly — hello! (laughs)

Anything else you'd like to say to your gay fans?

I just want to say thank you in the biggest, heartfelt way for being a supporter, for understanding, for standing strong for positive, good, real music. And for just being yourself. Do you. Be happy, like I am. I am so happy being me, and everybody should be that way.

Angie Stone
Jan. 20, 11 p.m.
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www.angiestoneonline.com

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'Octopus' delves into personal politics of sex, jealousy and HIV

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JIM FARMER

The cast of 'Octopus,' which premieres at Actor's Express Jan. 24. (Photo by Linnea Frye)

OVER THE YEARS, LOCAL PLAYWRIGHT STEVE Yockey has proven to be anything but a cookie-cutter writer. His latest drama, "Octopus," which sees its world premiere at Actor's Express next week, promises to continue that tradition.

Described as "a love story rendered through a postmodern gay lens," "Octopus" follows the aftermath of a sexual encounter between two gay male couples. Twenty-somethings (Joe Sykes and Tony Larkin) invite over an older couple (John Benzinger and Mitchell Anderson) for sex. The night proves fateful, and the aftermath involves issues from health and jealousy to a mysterious telegram delivery boy and a hungry sea monster.

Yockey says "Octopus" is a natural progression for him.

"Each play lets me be a little more daring as I approach the next one," he says.

'Octopus'
Jan. 24 - Feb. 23
Actor's Express, 887 W. Marietta St.
404-607-7469
www.actorsexpress.com

'The Drowsy Chaperone'
Jan. 22-27
Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St. NE
404-817-8700

In "Octopus," Yockey works through his thoughts about fidelity, sex and how gays are responding to HIV 25 years into the pandemic in the U.S.

"This was the perfect platform because more than anything, I love to explore a kind of stark realism colored with fantastic elements," he says. "'Octopus' is no exception, beginning in naturalism and essentially descending into the realm of fable by the end."

Yockey admits people often describe his work as dark.

"That's absolutely true of a lot of my stuff, but I try to lace the darkness with humor and cut it with the promise of some kind of rescue, even if that salvation is somewhat unconventional," he says.

OUT DIRECTOR KATE WARNER HELMS "Octopus," the sixth collaboration between the writer and director.

Warner calls "Octopus" a "love story, a modern story with mythic elements.

"It's sexy and tackles a big subject in a new way on a human scale," she says. "I love what the play says about compassion and the work that it takes to pay attention to achieve and maintain real human connection."

Yockey also relishes the chance to work with Anderson, the local gay actor known for the movie "Relax...It's Just Sex" and the TV show "Party of Five."

"I feel very lucky that Mitchell embraced the script," Yockey says. "I can't imagine anyone else originating [the character of] Andy. He's doing some exquisitely specific work in a role that has some interesting challenges."

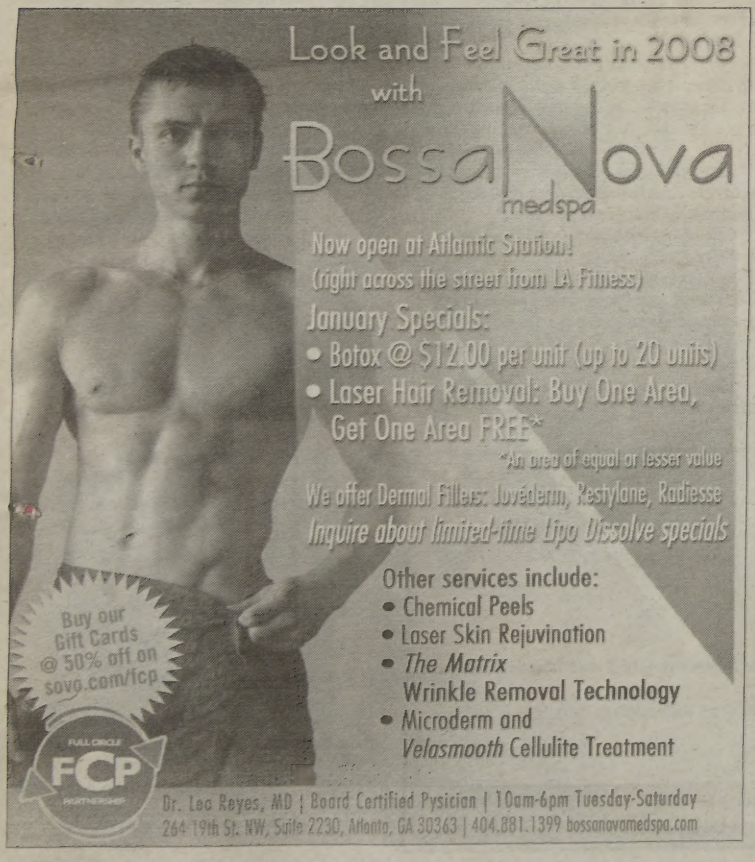
ALSO MAKING ITS LOCAL DEBUT THIS WEEK, the five-Tony-winning "The Drowsy Chaperone" features a lonely musical theater junkie, referred to only as "Man in Chair." The character's favorite show is a '20s musical called "Drowsy Chaperone," and to ease his boredom, he envisions that the musical actually comes alive.

Gay actor Kevin Crewell is part of the ensemble and says that "Chaperone" has a major gay sensibility.

"'Man in Chair' has a strong affinity for one of the guys in the show, and he also especially likes the fact that the lead actress has the ability to say and do what she feels," says Crewell, who regards himself as a musical theater junkie as well.

"I know all the obscure stuff out there, but this is the first time I've seen an original show in a while," he says. "There is really nothing like it around."

The actor was in the touring version of "Spamalot" in Atlanta last year. He jokes that gay representation in that show's cast and crew was only about 20 percent, but "Drowsy Chaperone" is about "50/50," he says.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A time like that

'A Place Like This' explores the onslaught of AIDS in '80s L.A.

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **BOOKS**

LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

MARK KING WORKED AS AN ACTOR, BECAME A phone sex star and tricked with Rock Hudson. He details all of those experiences in his recently released memoir, "A Place Like This," but that's not why King's debut book deserves to be on your bookshelf.

You might come for the lurid details of King's life in '80s Los Angeles, but you'll leave with a touching account of a gay man's often difficult quest for redemption for both himself and his community.

"I probably should have bitten my tongue here and there," says King, who reads at Outwrite Books on Jan. 24. "I think in the process of writing it, I forgot that anyone would ever read it. I just concentrated on telling the story and telling the truth."

King insists that even the most outrageous incidents recounted in the memoir are true, yet says he approached the writing of the book as if it were a novel — a choice that shines through in the memoir's well-constructed plot and moving, descriptive prose.

"I approached it in terms of building a story that had an arc to it," he says.

THE ARC OF KING'S STORY OFTEN DOESN'T position its main character in a flattering light. The author is unflinchingly honest exploring his own faults.

"I saw myself as a character, and not a very likable one," King says. "I certainly know that Mark is a character who is selfish and makes bad choices, and I wanted redemption for him. Fortunately the facts allowed that."

After arriving in L.A. in 1981 hoping to parlay his Opie good looks into acting success, Mark quickly becomes involved in a gay world of casual sex and recreational drug use. He exploits the fantasies of lonely men and neglects the man who loves him.

Mark's world, like the world of all gay men, changes when AIDS begins its horrific onslaught, chronicled in shattering detail through the deaths of several characters. But even after his friends fall ill and he is diagnosed with HIV himself, Mark sometimes succumbs to unsafe behavior — decisions that literally haunt him in the later chapters of the book.

"Not only did I know better — it was heretical, and truly, deeply dangerous and shameful," King says.

Still, the author says he doesn't fear backlash for telling the truth about departing from the mantra of "use a condom, all the time" preached by the AIDS groups for which he worked in L.A. and Atlanta.

"Those of us who lived through it are not going to have any problem accepting my behavior," he says.

THE STORY OF MARK, THE CHARACTER, ENDS AS he leaves Los Angeles for Atlanta. The story of King, the writer and activist, continued here first as executive director of AIDS Survival Project and later as a prominent spokesperson for AID Atlanta.

King wrote most of "A Place Like This" here in 1995, then "tinkered with it" for years. Meanwhile, his struggles against his personal demons continued, as he acknowledges in a note at the end of the memoir and in his appearance in the documentary film "Meth."

"As I said, I tried to approach Mark as a character, and I am so sad for him," says King, who is now in recovery. "He seemed to be getting it — there was some spirituality to the guy as he's leaving L.A., and a sense of maturity. And then as I know now, if I didn't squander all those things, I certainly lost my way all over again."

Given the material, it's a testament to King's writing talent that his memoir descends neither into blithe anecdotes nor bleak admonishments.

Instead, it deftly captures the tensions and contradictions that were the hallmarks of the decade when unbridled sexual freedom gave way to unimaginable despair.

Author **Mark S. King** (Photo courtesy King)

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iUniverse, Inc.
180 pages

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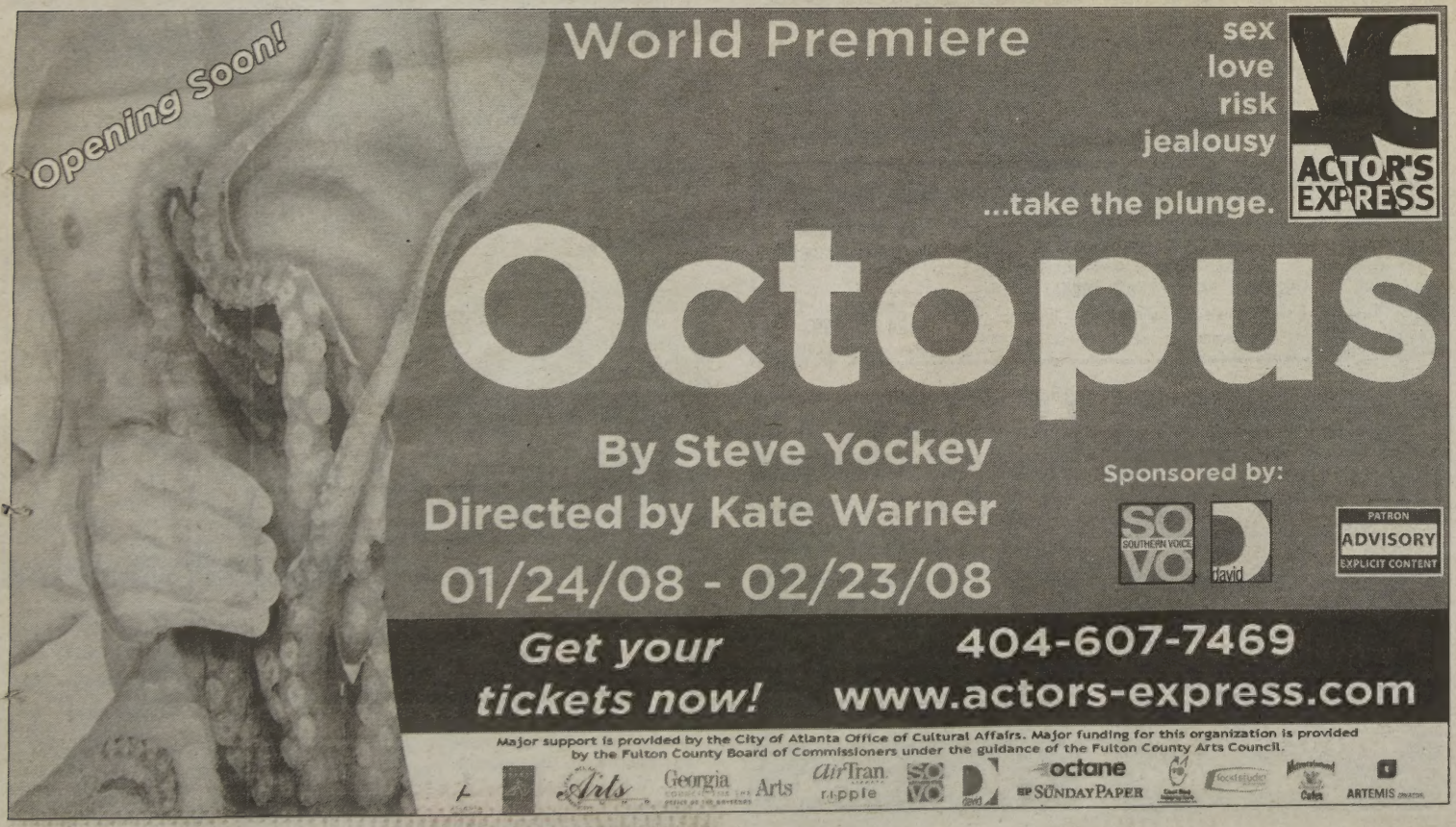

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SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **DINING**
MIKE FLEMING

IF YOU READ THIS COLUMN OFTEN, YOU KNOW it frequently favors comfort food and American traditions. We love a good burger or steak. Barbecue? Can't beat it.

When some of us venture off the meat-and-potatoes path, we only go as far as creative gourmet dishes with pretty presentation, or maybe Thai and Indian flavors. But a recent group trip to try Ethiopian cuisine for the first time inspired further investigation into a dining experience that is far from the ordinary in almost every way.

To understand Ethiopian cuisine and dining, you first need to know about injera. Injera, a spongy flatbread made of a fine grain unique to Ethiopia. It's sort of like the potato bread found in the Hawaiian Islands and the South Pacific. Tear off a piece of injera and use it to scoop up a variety of stews, greens, vegetable mixtures and meats with your fingers.

Ethiopian dining is most commonly shared by a group or couple from a common plate. A large platter (about two feet in diameter) is placed in the center of the table for everyone to dig in. The custom of sharing in this manner traditionally signifies the bonds of loyalty and friendship.

So basically, don't expect forks and individual plates of food except by request.

Among other staples in most Ethiopian restaurants is Wot, a dipping sauce that can be prepared using a variety of meats, fish, and vegetables. Wot is made with Berbere, a seasoning of red chili pepper and other spices. Alitcha is similar to Wot, but more mild.

Other commonly found Ethiopian spices and sauces are Nitir Kibe, a seasoned clarified butter for sautés; Kaey Wot, a lively sauce with berbere, nitir kibe and meat, fish or beans; and Mitmita, a red-pepper spice with cardamom and salt.

There is quite a bit of fish and beef on most Ethiopian menus, but vegetarians should find plenty to eat as well. Newcomers should try a combination platter to determine favorites for next time. Here are just a few choices hailed as some of the best Ethiopian cuisine in Atlanta.

Shared platters are the norm in most Ethiopian restaurants. (Photo courtesy africanchop.com)

QUEEN OF SHEBA: Step out of your car at this strip mall north of Druid Hills off of Briarcliff Road, and walk through the door into another part of the world. Small wicker tables on the floor signify a new experience, then the fragrant dishes and earthy flavors confirm it. Amidst all this newness, braised collard greens appear, and the offering here is good with a mild taste of ginger. There is a stage for live music, and Jazz is on tap every Thursday night.

MOYA: Make another strip mall stop not far away in Decatur, and you begin to realize that Ethiopian is almost like soul food, comfortable and inviting but with more complex flavor and spice. Moya adds in a hopping bar scene for cocktailers, but the real draw remains the food. Try a hot bowl of delicious stew on a cold winter night with the ever-present injera bread.

ENAT: Common Ethiopian dishes served without any frills are the order of the day at this mom-and-pop shop. Enat is open all day, but an opportunity to try of a wide variety of Ethiopian cuisine is available at the daily lunch buffet from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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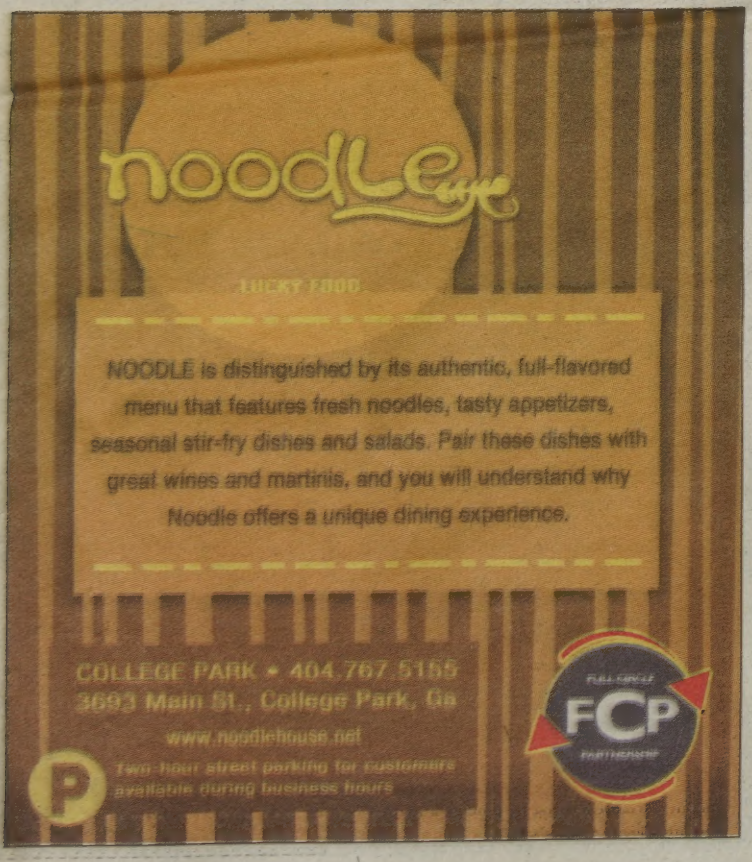
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Rustin honored at gay MLK Day breakfast

RUSTIN, continued from **Page 1**

"The way people viewed his being gay put obstacles in his path," adds Naegle, who ironically is scheduled to speak in Atlanta 55 years after one of the defining moments of Rustin's life and career.

The "circumstances" that forced Rustin out of the closet included a Jan. 23, 1953, arrest for lewd vagrancy in Pasadena, Calif., during which police caught Rustin performing oral sex in the backseat of a car. His arrest and 60-day prison sentence lingered throughout his life, ready to be exploited by whites who were opposed to civil rights and black leaders who were jealous of King's prominence.

"It severely restricted the public roles he was allowed to assume," writes biographer John D'Emilio in his book "Lost Prophet." Rustin also had to deal with repercussions from being a conscientious objector during World War II, and persistent rumors that he had communist roots.

"As both the peace and civil rights movements grew dramatically over the next decade, as a philosophy of non-violence became familiar to millions of Americans, Rustin's influence was everywhere," D'Emilio writes. "Yet he remained always in the background, his figure shadowy and blurred, his importance masked."

In one shameful and unsavory incident, U.S. Rep. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. (D-New York) allegedly threatened to go public with charges that King and Rustin were lovers, unless King agreed to call off a civil rights march scheduled to take place in New York. King capitulated to Powell's threats, and Rustin's feud with Powell eventually led to Rustin resigning as King's special assistant at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Often relegated to a behind-the-scenes role, Rustin's strategic brilliance nevertheless continued to shine, culminating with organizing the 1963 March on Washington at which King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. Recent history has been kind to Rustin, recognizing his bravery as an early proponent of non-violent direct action — a tactic he taught to King, and which they employed with great success through marches, boycotts and sit-ins.

"It would've been nice had he lived to see some of it, but he certainly saw quite a bit of recognition of his work during his lifetime," Naegle says of Rustin's posthumous fame. "I think he felt rewarded. I think what wasn't quite so evident was the degree to which he influenced the African-American civil rights movement itself, and the influences he had on Dr. King — that wasn't quite so recognized as it is now."

In addition to Naegle's Jan. 23 speech at the Atlanta-Fulton County Central Library, gay Atlanta will honor Rustin at the "Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Community Breakfast" on Jan. 21 as part of MLK Weekend.

Civil rights legend **Bayard Rustin** spent the last 10 years of his life in a relationship with **Walter Naegle.** (Photo from 'Lost Prophet,' Simon & Schuster)

"I did not 'come out of the closet' voluntarily — circumstances forced me out. While I have no problem with being publicly identified as homosexual, it would be dishonest of me to present myself as one who was in the forefront of the struggle for gay rights."

- Bayard Rustin, in 1986, declining an invitation to write in a black gay anthology.

EVOLVED INTO GAY ACTIVISM

Rustin and Naegle met in 1977 while waiting for a streetlight to turn green at the corner of 47th Street and Broadway in New York. The two clocked each other immediately, and grew into a May-December relationship that lasted until Rustin died of a heart attack in 1987.

Having an "academic" familiarity with the civil rights movement, Naegle quickly recognized Rustin's name from newspaper articles over the past two decades.

"If anything, it made me more interested — what he accomplished and the work that he had done," says Naegle, who also helped Rustin explore getting involved in the nascent gay rights movement during the '80s.

During the 1980s, Rustin testified in support of a gay non-discrimination bill in New York, spoke at the national convention of Black & White Men Together, and participated in a courthouse protest after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld anti-sodomy laws in Bowers v. Hardwick, a Georgia case involving a gay man arrested for having sex in his own bedroom.

In the 10 years they spent together, Naegle was able to see a side of Rustin that few in the public had experienced, including his exceptional talent for singing Elizabethan songs and Negro spirituals.

"There was a very strong creative streak there, which did tend to manifest itself in some of the ideas, and strategies and tactics that he came up for the movement," Naegle says.

And while only a novice gay activist, Rustin used that creativity in 1981 to legally solidify his relationship with Naegle, who was 38 years his junior.

"The whole notion of 'marriage' the way it's being pursued now was not something that was on the table at the time," Naegle says. "But he legally adopted me [as his son], which was our way of legalizing our relationship in a society where they don't permit gay people to marry. It was about the closest thing we could come to having a legal relationship."

Full schedule of MLK Weekend events, Page 21

Bayard Rustin-Audre Lorde Community Breakfast
Jan. 21, 9 a.m.
Atlanta First United Methodist Church
360 Peachtree St.
www.craigwerks.com

'Trailblazing Our Rights and Freedoms'
Featured speaker: Walter Naegle
Jan. 23, 7 p. m.
Atlanta Central Library
1 Margaret Mitchell Square
www.af.public.lib.ga.us/central_library
• Event also honors Winston Johnston, a gay Atlanta man who was a close friend of Coretta Scott King

Reception for Walter Naegle
Jan. 23, 9 p.m. (following library event)
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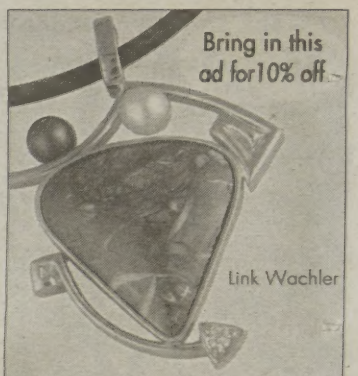

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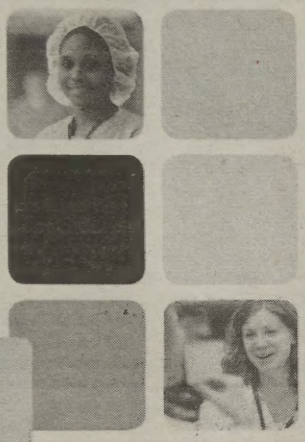

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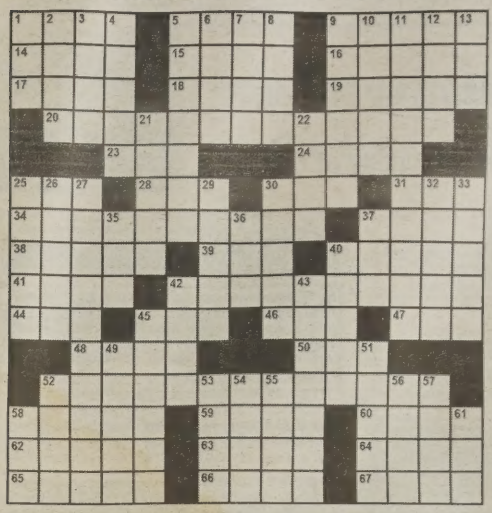

Q Puzzle: TEE OFF

ACROSS

1. Composer Shaiman
5. Leaning erection site
9. A marble player may shoot it off
14. State where two women could be in a marriage, formerly
15. Israeli author ___ Oz
16. Meat-filled treats
17. Push a queen across a board, e.g.
18. "___ Get a Witness" (Marvin Gaye)
19. Parker of "South Park," and others
20. Like a drag queen without a wrap?
23. Lotion letters at Sitges
24. Starting from
25. River of Ulrichs' country
28. Lily for Colette
30. Explosive stick
31. Prog. of Eleanor's husband
34. Hiss at some oral sex fans?
37. Like a Ryan Idol film
38. Circle of Uranus
39. Frigid
40. Blonde Ambition, and others
41. Lone Star sch.
42. Femme's ruined undergarment?
44. Road top
45. "Jumpin' Jack Flash," to Mick Jagger
46. Kind of man, in Oz
47. Land of Damascus (abbr.)
48. Govt. guy
50. Get hard
52. Arthur's age group?
58. "Terminal Bar" playwright Paul
59. Like Cammermeyer's fatigues
60. Cry before getting off
62. Queer writer Rev. Monroe
63. Stud fee?
64. Bone below the elbow
65. It goes under a jockey's shorts
66. Hot to trot
67. Seal in the juices, to Traci Des Jardins

DOWN

1. Elton John's mother
2. "Exotica" director Egoyan
3. Singer Norah's father
4. Game with many openings
5. Ocean of Bali Ha'i
6. "___ Ordinary Man" ("My Fair Lady")
7. "Like a Virgin," for one
8. ___ were
9. Bear witness
10. "Queen Christina" star
11. Patty Sheehan, e.g.?
12. "What's it ___?"
13. Logo for a Dean Cain role
21. Banana treat
22. ___ Christian Andersen
25. Up partner
26. One from the heart
27. Superior of Stonewall Jackson
29. Bounds gaily
30. Words to a shy partner
32. Tim of "Rocky Horror" fame
33. "The Gay Caballero" star Romero
35. Labium
36. "The Name of the Rose" writer
37. Muscle Mary's pride
40. "God loves everybody," to Jane Spahr
42. Not nuts
43. Edith Eyde pseudonym
45. Gay fetish mag "Bound & ___"
49. Home state of Edna St. Vincent Millay
51. Shakespeare's Andronicus
52. Lahr of "The Wizard of Oz"
53. Neighbor of Minn.
54. River of Wilde's land
55. Rex Reed et al. do this to movies
56. Rubberneck
57. One of Columbus threesome
58. What Tim might call Tyne
61. Way out

Answers on page 39

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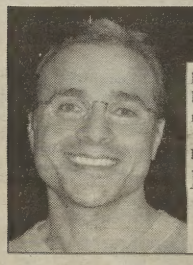

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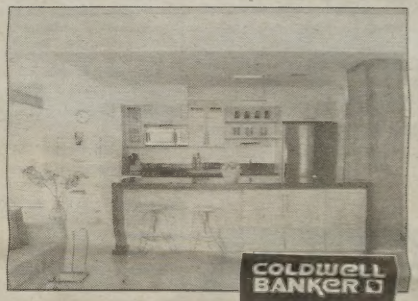

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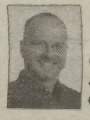

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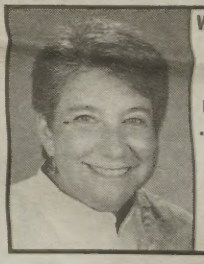

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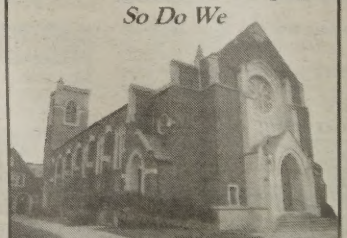

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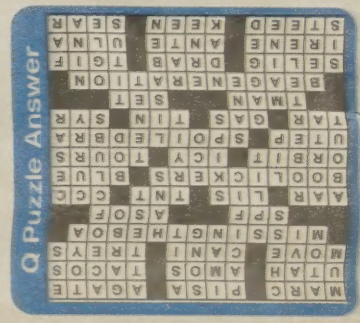

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PET OF THE WEEK
BREED: Scottish terrier
AGE: 3 years old
HOBBIES: Chasing my new little brother and sliding on the rug until it balls up in the foyer.
FAVORITE PLACE: On your pillow!
DISLIKES: Dry dog food, but...
LIKES: Cat food.
PHILOSOPHY: It's all about me!
No more wire hangers!
Maddie
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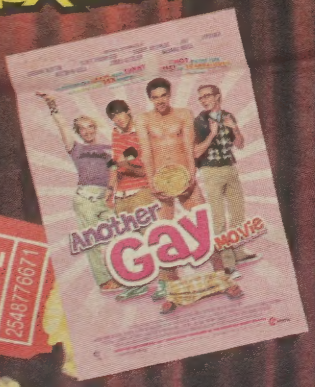

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A CHRISTMAS WISH

LOCAL, NATIONAL ACTIVISTS PLAN HOLIDAY PROTESTS

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'Circus' act: Can Britney Spears score a comeback with new album? Page 33

Gay adoption ban: Could what happened in Ark. happen here? Page 5

Obama's cabinet: Lesbian under consideration for labor secretary. Page 12

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DEC. 5 - DEC. 11, 2008

An email from Atlanta activist Craig Washington sparks a new Black LGBT Coalition. **Page 17**

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Bellissima keeps patrons on their toes with unique lineup. **Page 31**

"It had to be odd…If it's me I'm kinda hoping maybe I do screw it up…Do you really want to be good at kissing a guy?…When you and Sean Penn are getting ready to kiss, do you talk about it? How drunk are you?"

"Late Show" host ***David Letterman****, interviewing actor James Franco on what it was like kissing Sean Penn in the film "Milk." (Queerty.com, Dec. 1)*

(Photo by J.P. Filo/CBS/AP)

on the record

"My hope is to leave a world ... a place that embraces difference, not with hate, but with love."

A 1978 letter from Harvey Milk, read by his nephew at a Nov. 28 vigil marking 30 years since Milk, the first openly gay San Francisco City Supervisor, and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated.

"You can kill the messenger, but you can't kill the message."

Openly gay San Francisco City Supervisor Tom Ammiano, in a speech about Milk at last week's rally at San Francisco City Hall. (San Jose Mercury News, Nov. 28)

"They're shining their light, we're shining ours."

Bobby Parker, a gay Mormon who organized a gay marriage vigil during the Nov. 29 lighting of Christmas displays at the Mormon Mesa Arizona Temple. Gay rights activists have criticized the Mormon Church's massive funding of California's Proposition 8 and other anti-gay ballot initiatives. (Associated Press, Nov. 29)

"It is clear that sexual orientation is not a predictor of a person's ability to parent. A child in need of love, safety and stability does not first consider the sexual orientation of his parent. The exclusion causes some children to be deprived of a permanent placement with a family that is best suited to their needs."

Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Cindy Lederman in a Nov. 25 ruling that found Florida's law banning gay adoption unconstitutional. The state is likely to appeal, and the case may reach the Florida Supreme Court. (Associated Press, Nov. 25)

"When you think about it, you and I really have a lot in common… What is it? Oh, I remember: we're both Gayy-briel Byrne fans."

Lesbian talk show host Rosie O'Donnell to newly out singer Clay Aiken, who appeared in his "Spamalot" costume on her Thanksgiving night "Rosie Live" variety show. (TVGuide.com, Nov. 27)

"Thomas Beatie, legally speaking the world's first pregnant man, forced us to glimpse what male motherhood is like — and it's both beautiful and terrifying. Regardless of how history views the transgender man … he sure left the Y-chromosome crew with lasting questions: Would you if you could? Do the joys of childbearing outweigh the drawbacks? Will they give me an epidural?"

Details magazine, naming "pregnant man" ***Thomas Beatie*** *to its list of "40 Most Influential Men Under 47." (Details, December issue)*

Clay Aiken (Photo by AP)

Thomas Beatie
(Photo courtesy Oprah Winfrey Show)

SOUTHERN VOICE
1075 Zonolite Road, Suite 1-D
Atlanta, GA 30306
404-876-1819
(fax) 404-876-2709
editor@sovo.com
www.sovo.com
www.myspace.com/southern_voice

PUBLISHER
KEVIN HOPPER EXT. 24

EDITORIAL
Editor LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN EXT. 19
Features Editor MIKE FLEMING EXT. 30
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Contributors JIM FARMER, MATT FORKE, JOE PHILLIPS, SHER PRUITT
Illustrators ALISON BECHDEL, DAVID BRADY
Online Editor REBECCA ARMENDARIZ
Webmaster STEVE RYAN
Content Manager RYAN WATKINS
rwatkins@window-media.com
IT Manager QUINN MANSFIELD
qmansfield@window-media.com

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AP Associated Press

Experts recommend advance planning for gay parents

Ga. doesn't ban gay adoption, but legal, financial challenges remain

By RYAN LOFTIS

While there is no law in Georgia limiting adoptions by lesbians and gays, prospective parents still face legal and financial challenges that require significant advance planning, according to speakers at a recent panel sponsored by Southern Voice and One Georgia Bank.

Jeffrey Cleghorn, a partner in the Atlanta law firm of Kitchens New, described adoptions options for gays and lesbians. The Georgia standard for legal adoption requires any adult to be at least 25 years old, a state resident for at least six months and financially, physically and mentally able to have custody, although married adults under 25 can adopt if living with their spouse.

"You hear that and you go, 'That doesn't sound too difficult,'" Cleghorn said at the Nov. 19 event, which took place at Hotel Indigo. "OK, fine, but how is that standard applied to lesbian people and gay people, bisexual and transgender people? That can be a little trickier."

Second-parent adoption, which allows same-sex parents to adopt the child of their partner without the partner losing parental rights, is an option, he said. Georgia law does not specifically allow or prohibit second-parent adoption for gays and lesbians. While judges in some counties have approved second-parent adoption, Cleghorn said the farther one gets from the Atlanta-Decatur area the more likely a judge is to deny it.

Reproductive technologies including surrogacy and ova and sperm donations was another option Cleghorn discussed. It's important in those situations, he said, to have good donor contracts.

There are steps same-sex Georgia couples can take to protect their relationships, measures Cleghorn said are especially important for couples looking to adopt. He recommended establishing domestic partnership agreements, as well as power of attorney and advanced directives for healthcare.

With Florida's ban on gay adoption and the successful initiative banning adoption by unmarried people in Arkansas, Cleghorn said there continues to be concern that the Georgia legislature will follow suit.

"There's no great concern with this coming legislative session in January that that is a real threat, but it is something that could happen, so we have to be diligent as a community in supporting organizations such as Georgia Equality and the Stonewall Bar Association and others who are keeping an eye out to protect us as best they can," Cleghorn said. "What we kind of need to keep in context is we still live in Georgia and we still have a long way to go in terms of the broader spectrum of marriage rights, of family rights, before these kinds of risks are completely eliminated."

FINANCIAL CONCERNS Adoption is a financial challenge as well. Cleghorn estimated clients will spend $3,500 - $5,000 in attorney fees for their first adoption, and an additional $1,500 – $2,500 for their second. Adele Gipson, a senior financial planner with Consolidated Planning Corporation in Atlanta, said adoption can cost up to $40,000, while surrogacy can cost as much as $150,000.

"You want to go into the whole process with your eyes wide open in terms of what it's going to cost you," Gipson said. "Typically you would like to start three to five years ahead of time and start planning and saving for the funds to create your family."

To acquire the necessary funds for adoption, Gipson recommended investing in a high-yielding certificate of deposit or money market. While many people choose to borrow against their home equity or 401 (k), Gipson said this should be a method of last resort so people can avoid going into debt before even having their child.

When filing their federal income taxes, parents may be able to claim a tax credit for expenses they paid to adopt a child. The adoption tax credit is valuable, Gipson said, because it reduces parents' tax liability dollar for dollar. The maximum adoption tax credit that can be claimed in 2008 is $11,650 of qualified adoption expenses per eligible child.

Attorney **Jeff Cleghorn** said prospective gay parents should be aware of ways to protect their families under Georgia law. (Photo by R.O. Youungblood)

Additionally, Gipson said states will often subsidize the costs of adopting children with special needs.

Kristine French of Independent Adoption Center in Tucker said the typical wait time for adopting a child is 12 – 18 months, although same-sex male couples may have to wait less than 12 months.

Jay Varnedoe and his partner, Jason Henderson, live in Cumming and came to the seminar to learn about their parenting options.

"It was a wonderful presentation," Varnedoe said. "It actually hit a lot of points we had an interest in and also brought up other things we need to be aware of when proceeding into the future."

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Ark. adoption ban could start national trend, activists fear

Ga. seen as potential target for similar legislation

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

Jerry Cox doesn't need flashy campaigns or a lot of money to "blunt the homosexual agenda" in Arkansas. He's done it twice, and all he needs is a ballot box and a church bulletin insert.

Cox is president of the Arkansas Family Council, a relatively small religious organization that is dedicated to, among other things, thwarting civil rights for gay people. The Arkansas Family Council won an unexpected success for social conservatives on Nov. 4 when 57 percent of the state's voters approved the "Arkansas Adoption and Foster Care Act," a measure that banned unmarried couples from adopting or fostering children. The measure applies regardless of sexual orientation, but was designed to target gay couples.

Polls leading up to the event showed a much closer race, and the work behind the upset win might empower conservative groups in Georgia, Cox said.

Cox and the Arkansas Family Council essentially circumvented the state legislature in Little Rock and appealed directly to the state's rural, religious base. He believes that same strategy could work in Georgia.

"It's probably the case that when you get out of Atlanta you find that the rest of the state isn't that liberal, and that's the same in Arkansas," Cox said.

The Arkansas Family Council was outspent by its opposition. They were unable to mount much of a media campaign in response to television ads and endorsements by gay-friendly politicians, so Cox had to find another way to reach his voters.

Where gays have found success turning to social networking sites, the Arkansas Family Council turned to an older form of social networking — the church door. The Arkansas Family Council distributed bulletin inserts to more than 1,000 churches.

"That as much as anything turned it around," Cox said.

ONGOING BATTLE

The Arkansas Family Council had been working to pass a similar law for several years.

"We asked the legislature several times to pass a law about co-habitation, gay adoption, and it would pass in the House and fail in the Senate, or pass in the Senate and fail in the House," Cox said.

Rep. Cathy Webb (D-Little Rock) is Arkansas' first and only openly gay lawmaker, and defeated one version of the bill in committee.

"The minute we voted it down in the legislature, that's what they announced what they were going to do — and clearly they were successful," she said.

Cox announced they would ignore the legislative process and put the law directly in front of the voters. The Arkansas Constitution allows citizen groups to put proposed constitutional amendments on the ballot if they collect a number of signatures equal to 10 percent of the votes cast in the most recent gubernatorial election, or propose laws if they reach 8 percent.

"We decided to pursue a law because the threshold for a law is lower than an amendment," Cox said.

Once Arkansas officials certified the signatures the two sides embarked on different strategies. Webb said the state's network of gay organizations went to national organizations, but couldn't get any funding.

"Everything went to California, with Florida second behind," she said. "We had enough money to run ads, but not enough to fund a grassroots organization."

Cox had the same problem, but took a different approach.

"Their campaign was strictly through the churches," Webb said. "The emails they sent out from the churches talked only about this as a gay thing."

On Nov. 25, a Miami Circuit Court judge ruled against a Florida law that barred gays and lesbians from adopting children. Attorneys from the state said they will appeal the decision, which could likely result in the case going before the Florida Supreme Court. The American Civil Liberties Union brought the case on behalf of a gay couple wishing to adopt two children.

An ACLU spokesperson has told several media outlets that the organization is considering whether or not to fight the Arkansas law. Lambda Legal, a legal organization working on to advance the civil rights of gays through the courts, is also evaluating the case.

"We're certainly looking at it [the Arkansas measure] and deciding if we are going to challenge it," said Susan Sommer, senior counsel for Lambda and director of Youth in Out of Home Care project. "It is certainly bad for children."

COULD BAN HAPPEN IN GA.?

Although 24 states allow voters to place initiatives on the ballot without going through the state legislature, Georgia is not one of them. The only way to amend Georgia's Constitution is through an amendment approved by two-thirds of the House and Senate and then a majority of the state's voters, or through a constitutional convention, which must follow the same process.

"Similar to constitutional amendments, the law does not provide for a voter-sponsored ballot initiative," Secretary of State Spokesperson Matt Carrothers said.

Although any change to the law would come through the Georgia General Assembly, a number of gay-inclusive organizations fear a similar law or ballot initiative could come within the next two years.

Kathy Colbenson is the CEO of CHRIS Kids, an organization that provides housing and mental health treatment for children who have been abused, neglected or rejected by their families. CHRIS Kids runs a Rainbow Program for gay youth who have aged out of the foster care system, and works with younger gay and transgender children.

"Because I do think people want to place kids with families, my attitude right now is until times improve, I'm just happy to keep [gay adoption] under the radar screen, because if it gets too much on the radar there are people out there who might launch efforts against it," Colbenson said.

Jerry Cox (center) and supporters carry boxes of gay adoption ban petitions into the Arkansas State Capitol on Aug. 21. (Photo by Danny Johnston/AP)

In a Nov. 26 article in Time magazine, Jennifer Chrisler, executive director of the Boston-based Family Equality Council, said what happened in Arkansas could be the beginning of a blueprint for future state ballot measures to ban gay adoption.

According to Chrisler, her group expects legislative bans on gay adoption to come up soon in Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee as part of a movement similar to the numerous state-by-state measures that banned gay marriage in 2004.

"The other side was very strategic about their efforts to ban gay marriage," Chrisler told Time. "They were able to bring that issue to the attention of the American people well before Americans were ready to have that conversation. They are likely to use a similar strategy when it comes to parenting issues."

However, Georgia Republican leaders are so far denying any such measure is expected to arise in the upcoming state legislative session beginning in January.

House Rules Committee Chairman Rep. Earl Ehrhart (R-Powder Springs) told Southern Voice earlier this year he isn't inclined to let any adoption legislation move out of his committee for a number of reasons, including privacy issues.

Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle holds significant influence over the General Assembly, and is a likely candidate for governor in 2010.

"I'm not aware of any specific issues as far as the legislature moving forward on a ballot initiative such as that," Cagle told Southern Voice last month. "Obviously it's early, and once you get into the session you never know, but I'm not aware of any early movement."

BREAKING UP FAMILIES

While the Arkansas law would not undo any completed adoptions, it would remove foster children from established homes. The number of children in the Arkansas and Georgia foster care systems changes daily, but a number of those young people identify as gay, lesbian or transgender.

At of the end of October, a total of 11,270 children had been at least housed by the state's foster care system in 2008, according to the Georgia Department of Human Resources. Of those children to come into contact with the Division of Families & Children Services, 2,366 children were eligible for adoption. The state does not track the orientation of children it comes in contact with, nor does it inquire about the sexuality of foster parents.

Removing gay families from the foster pool could make finding homes, or group homes, where gay young people can feel safe more difficult, Colbenson said.

Cox argued that gay foster youth are better off not having gay parents.

"Here's our take on that whole issue," he said. "Foster and adoptive children have either being abused or neglected or both, so if you had a child who has problem with drugs or alcohol you wouldn't put a child in a home with someone who abuses drugs or alcohol to make them feel comfortable."

While Georgia groups remain watchful for similar legislation, for Webb, the fight for equality in Arkansas goes on. During the same week voters passed the initiative, Webb's party voted her Majority Whip and vice co-chair of the state's budget committee.

"It's heartbreaking," Webb said of the loss. "But we will continue to fight, and I go to the legislature every day with just as much right to be there as any other lawmaker."

Senate candidate Jim Martin: 'We found our soul'

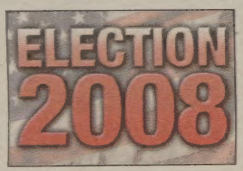
Martin says elections redefined the Democratic Party

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

Joan and **Jim Martin** hold hands during his election night party at Park Tavern Dec. 2. Martin failed to defeat Republican incumbent Saxby Chambliss in the runoff. (Photo by Matt Schafer)

Jim Martin, a former state lawmaker who fought for HIV funding and an inclusive hate crimes bill, told his supporters Tuesday night at Park Tavern that although he had lost his race for the U.S. Senate, they had done the right thing.

"Tonight we celebrate a victory beyond our campaign," Martin said Dec. 2, after conceding to Republican Sen. Saxby Chambliss. "We celebrate a campaign that stood up for Georgians, ending the top-down economics that have destroyed our middle class, ending the war in Iraq that has destroyed our standing in the world."



Although Martin forced a runoff in the Nov. 4 general election, he lost to incumbent Chambliss by a 14 point spread on Dec. 2. With election results still to be certified, Martin garnered approximately 900,000 votes to Chambliss' 1.2 million, for a 57 percent to 43 percent loss. Chambliss' victory ensures the Democrats will not have the 60 seat majority they need for a filibuster-proof Congress.

In Martin's concession speech, he pointed to the election of President-Elect Barack Obama, and the future of the Democratic Party.

"In this process in Georgia, as Democrats, we found our soul. We are the party of opportunity for all Georgians," he said.

After his speech Martin did not talk with the press, and his campaign spokesperson said he would not grant interview requests in the days following the runoff.

Both the Republican Party of Georgia and the Chambliss campaign did not return calls from Southern Voice seeking comment. In the three Human Rights Campaign congressional scorecards on gay rights that have been issued since Chambliss won his Senate seat, he has received a score of 20 out of 100 for 2007-08 and 0 for the prior sessions of Congress.

HRC and the gay National Stonewall Democrats backed Martin in the race. The national office of the Log Cabin Republicans did not endorse Chambliss, although some members of the gay GOP group's Georgia chapter supported him, according to Jamie Ensley, Georgia Log Cabin president.

"Georgia LCR members will continue to talk and lobby Sen. Chambliss about LGBT issues that the Senate will be voting on in the next two years," Ensley said. "We are hopeful that he'll give full consideration to these proposals, since most fair-minded Georgians support them."

With his Senate bid and an earlier race for lieutenant governor, Martin has run the most successful recent Democratic statewide campaigns in Georgia. Even though he lost both by significant margins, Democratic Party of Georgia spokesperson Martin Matheny said his party is becoming stronger.

"It says the same thing that we've been saying all along," Matheny said. "We didn't lose overnight. We lost power in statewide races and the General Assembly because the Republicans out-organized us over eight years.... Rome wasn't built in a day."

Gay-endorsed candidates win judicial races

Two judicial candidates endorsed by Georgia Equality won runoff elections on Dec. 2. Holland & Knight attorney Sara Doyle narrowly beat former prosecutor and defense attorney Mike Sheffield. Doyle beat Sheffield by 60,000 votes in a 52 percent to 48 percent win.

Although the race was non-partisan, Sheffield branded himself as a socially conservative Republican and was open about his opposition to gay marriage and the Supreme Court ruling that struck down sodomy laws.

Doyle kept her political leanings private, but did seek Georgia Equality's endorsement because the gay advocacy organization's questionnaire was primarily about legal qualifications, and one question about workplace equality.

Largely because of Georgia Equality's endorsement, many social conservatives branded Doyle "bad for families" and a far left liberal. After her victory, Doyle said that while Georgia Equality's endorsement might have fanned some fires, it was a positive.

"I guess that could be perceived as a negative, but the people who knew me know that that's in no way accurate," Doyle said of being called "anti-family."

Another Georgia Equality endorsed judicial candidate, Tangela Barrie, won her runoff for an open Stone Mountain Circuit Superior Court judgeship against Administrative Law Judge Johnny Mason. Barrier garnered 85,084 votes, or 56.7 percent to Mason's 65,059, or 43.3 percent.

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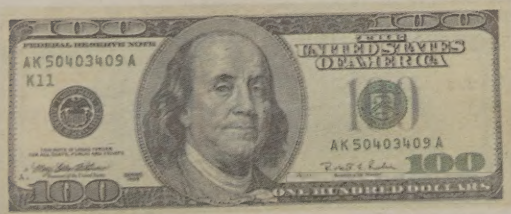

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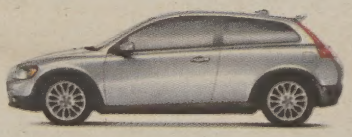

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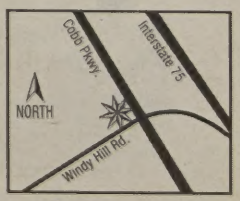

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Positive Impact adds HIV testing, substance abuse program

Agency expands to cover void left when other groups closed

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN
lbrown@sovo.com

On World AIDS Day, leaders at Positive Impact learned they were awarded a cooperative agreement with the federal Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to keep alive a crucial HIV testing site. The Dec. 1 announcement comes on the heels of Positive Impact also expanding its services to offer a substance abuse support program.

Positive Impact, which was founded to provide mental health services for people affected by HIV, expanded to take on both programs when the organizations that previously offered them shut down.

"The community needed these programs, the clients needed these programs, so we couldn't just let them go," said Paul Plate, Positive Impact executive director.

The new programs make Positive Impact the only stand-alone agency in the United States to offer HIV prevention, testing, mental health services and substance abuse support groups under the same roof, said Danny Sprouse, director of prevention for the agency.

The Dec. 1 announcement from the CDC means the Counseling, Testing & Referral Center will remain open at least until June 2010, when the contract ends. The testing center's fate had been in limbo since its previous operator, AIDS Survival Project, announced the organization would close at the end of the year.

Positive Impact and AIDS Survival Project shared a building at 139 Ralph McGill Blvd., so the new agreement will allow the testing center to continue operating without disruption.

The decision is a relief to Kevin English, who led the testing center under AIDS Survival Project and will continue in that role with Positive Impact.

The center tests an average of 200 people per month, including many who return regularly for testing, English said. Approximately 3 to 5 percent test positive for HIV, a rate much higher than general testing centers like public health departments, he said. The center offers Oraquick testing that does not require a needle stick; results are available in 20 minutes.

"If we had to close, it would have been difficult for our clients to find other locations to get tested," said English, noting the center's central location and convenient access to MARTA. "It would have been a great loss."

Positive Impact thought about applying to the CDC to run the testing center when it was first created years ago, Sprouse said.

"We seriously considered it then, but our HIV prevention program was just budding at that time," he said. "Now we have a very strong prevention program, so testing is a natural progression."

Kevin English heads up the HIV Counseling, Testing & Referral Center, which will now be managed by Positive Impact. (Photo by Laura Douglas-Brown)

Positive Impact's free HIV prevention programs are open to anyone regardless of HIV status or income level; specific programs include groups targeted to black gay men and white and Latino gay men, among others. The testing center is also free of charge.

To access Positive Impact's mental health services, clients must be HIV-positive or else "affected" by HIV, meaning someone close to them — like a partner or spouse — has HIV. Those services are free to people whose income is less than three times the federal poverty level, but Plate stresses that no person wanting help will be turned away.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE HELP In November, Positive Impact expanded its services to include substance abuse support groups and counseling for people affected by HIV. The new program fills the void left when another HIV non-profit, Our Common Welfare, closed earlier this year.

The substance abuse program includes a two-hour, professionally-led support group that meets daily, according to Gwen Davies, Positive Impact clinical director. Clients also receive individualized counseling and can access all of Positive Impact's other services.

About one-third of Positive Impact's current mental health clients are also substance abusers, so the agency saw a clear need to offer a program dealing directly with that issue, Davies said.

Positive Impact's current annual budget is $1.5 million, with $1.3 million coming from grants, Plate said. The agency is "really stable for the moment," but launching the new services in a difficult financial environment means the agency needs more community support than ever before, he said.

Immediate needs range from financial donations to two large area rugs for the substance abuse program, Plate said.

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Organizing a wish list

'All We Want for Christmas is Equal Rights' is second grassroots effort by new ATL gay activists

By MATT SCHAFER
mschafer@sovo.com

The next generation of gay rights activists is awakening in Atlanta, and they know how to use social networking websites to gather a crowd to bring attention to their cause.

When California voters approved Proposition 8, which took away the right for same-sex couples to marry, approximately 1 million gay men, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people and their allies joined together Nov. 15 to protest at state capitols and town halls across the country. In Atlanta, about 1,500 people rallied on the Capitol steps in an event largely organized on Facebook, in chat rooms and by emails from an internet group called Join the Impact.

"In my opinion, Prop. 8 really was a wakeup call. It really was the face of the gay rights movement of this decade," said Jeff Schade, an Atlanta organizer for the Prop. 8 rally.

"To me it was really a wakeup call to our community, as far as what we're trying to achieve. When I look at the GLBT community we have a large community but we're also very scattered, and so we are trying to bring the community together," he said.

Schade, 23, manages a medical office while going to school at Georgia State University. He is one of the half-dozen organizers of the Nov. 15 Atlanta protests, and like many of the participants, it was his first entry into political activism.

"We're not a part of any organization," he said. "There are about six or seven of us, and we all have full-time jobs."

Still, the young activists organized the massive Capitol rally, while a separate group organized a candlelight vigil that drew 1,000 to the intersection of 10th Street and Piedmont Avenue later the same day. Organizers for both events promoted them together, and with less than five days to plan managed to pull off the largest gay rights protests in Atlanta in more than a decade.

In order to maintain the momentum from those protests, Schade and his group is planning other events, like the Dec. 13 "All I Want for Christmas is Equal Rights." Organizers are asking for gay people to walk the sidewalks of Lenox Square Mall and Phipps Plaza with signs to bring attention to gay civil rights. At press time Dec. 3, more than 200 people had signed up to attend the protest on a Facebook page for the event.

"There won't be any speakers like the last rally because it just won't work because it's on sidewalks," Schade said. "We are asking people to bring signs, like they did last time."

Other loose affiliations spurred by Join the Impact are encouraging events in December in cities like San Diego, Orlando, Los Angeles and West Lafayette, Ind.

'CALL IN GAY' Another upcoming national protest, scheduled for Dec. 10, grew out of an idea voiced by a straight Los Angeles Times writer who proposed "No Gays for a Day." In his column, Joel Stein wrote, "No Gays for a Day will demonstrate what it would be like if — as so much of the non-coastal U.S. seems to desire — gays just disappeared. You may not even know who all your daily gays are, so there's no predicting the impact. It probably won't shut down the restaurant industry like the immigrants did, but know this for certain: [that day] will be a day that fashion does not move forward."

The somewhat tongue-in-cheek column prompted Sean Hetherington, a stand-up comedian and personal trainer, and Aaron Hartzler, his boyfriend, to think that the idea not only sounded plausible, but worthwhile.

"We noticed that there wasn't web page or anything out there and so we decided to brand it ourselves," Hetherington said.

Hartzler is a graphic designer and they created www.daywithoutagay.org and a corresponding Facebook event. Within two weeks of creating the site they had over 10,000 hits and up to 100 emails a day. The event has even garnered international media attention.

"We're not really involved with anyone's organization," Hetherington said. "We just sort of did it. We didn't expect it to gain steam as fast as it did."

Hetherington and his organizers are encouraging people to "call in gay" on Dec. 10 — International Human Rights Day — and volunteer for a charitable organization. The website lists volunteer opportunities and media contacts for those wishing to participate.

In 30 states, including Georgia, there are no protections offered for gay or transgender workers, so if someone comes out at work, the possibility remains he or she could be fired simply for being gay.

Hetherington said he has received a number of emails from gay people calling his idea divisive and counterproductive.

"One of the problems that we saw with Day Without a Gay, is that it seemed like a President Bushism, that you're either with us or against us, and it was a little over to the top," Hetherington said, acknowledging that the boycott could hurt gay-owned or gay-friendly employers. "So yeah, if you work for a company where you're protected, or you feel like you're not safe, by all means don't take the day off."

BOYCOTT BUSTS? A number of one-day boycotts have come and gone, including the Boycott for Equality, an Oct. 8, 2004 event organized by an Atlanta resident who encouraged gay people to stay out of work and spend no money that day. Most have failed to achieve a noticeable impact.

Richard Ebeling, a senior fellow and author with the American Institute for Economic Research in Massachusetts, doubts Day Without a Gay will have much of an economic or political impact.

"Unless they devise a way to get media attention with visibility for cameras, and impact for the community with someone who said, 'Oh, it hurt for a day,' it's really a hollow attempt," Ebeling said.

The economic impact of a boycott is hard to measure, Ebeling said. The way to measure a boycott's success isn't to look at a company's bottom line, he said, but how much attention a boycott receives.

"It depends upon how successful the organizers are at getting the media out," Ebeling said. "Members of the gay community don't show up to work, how do you get your 15 minutes of media coverage out of that? Unless they're out there standing with signs to protest, there is no visual impact."

In contrast to the 2006 "Day without Immigrants," where many Hispanics did not go to work and protested in large numbers, Ebeling said the gay community is too diffused and diversified to have a great deal of impact.

"Certain areas of Los Angeles, for instance, are largely Hispanic. If they don't shop or show up to work on one day it's noticeable," Ebeling said. "If [gays] go out and boycott and it's noticeable that people are not entering the store then it's effective, but out of any particular store how many particular patrons would be gay? And how would that make any impact?"

MOVING FORWARD According to Ebeling's theory, "All I Want for Christmas is Equal Rights" has a greater chance of succeeding, even though organizers will urge shoppers to give to charity rather than shop.

Buckhead's Lenox Mall and Phipps Plaza will be crowded with shoppers, there is a large population of gays in the surrounding neighborhoods, the protest has a visual element, and it is taking place on a Saturday afternoon — which is convenient for both participants and the television news cycle.

Unlike the Nov. 15 protest and vigil, the goal of this event is to interact with the public, but in a non-confrontational manner, Schade stressed.

"We will have bullhorns and be leading chants, so it's not a silent protest," he said. "We're stressing to keep it peaceful, keep it respectful, we're not out to push ourselves into anything."

Depending on the success of their second event, Schade and his fellow organizers are looking at how to move forward, and hopefully grow their efforts.

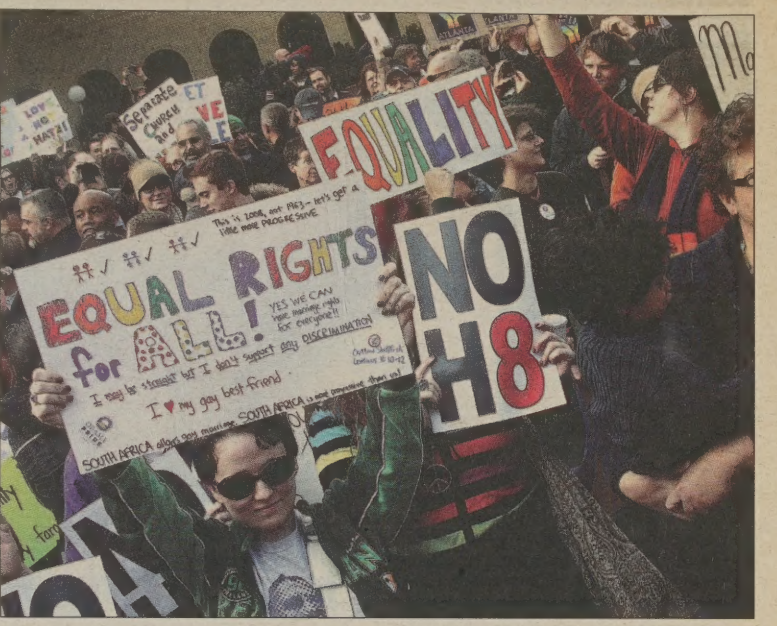
"We've got probably about 10 events we're brainstorming about for the next couple of months," Schade said. "We're trying to get a good core of people we're trying to mobilize, and as we organize we would like to move outside the perimeter."

Georgia Equality Executive Director Jeff Graham has been involved in almost every gay protest in Atlanta for the past 20 years.

"The technology is different, but the way it worked before the advent of Facebook or email even, we picked up the phone, and we distributed a lot of fliers," Graham said.

Georgia Equality hasn't used social networking sites to great success in the past, but is supporting the recent movement.

"We really want to see where their grassroots efforts will lead," Graham said. "I certainly hope by supporting them now, if we get into a very difficult situation in the upcoming General Assembly session, we can count on that effort to get support."



Atlanta organizers of the Proposition 8 protest at the state capitol on Nov. 15 are now planning the 'All We Want for Christmas is Equal Rights' rally at Lenox Mall and Phipps Plaza on Dec. 13. (Photo by Bo Shell)

'Day Without A Gay'
Dec. 10
www.daywithoutagay.org

'All I Want for Christmas is Equal Rights'
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A lesbian in Obama's cabinet?

Speculation swirls around Maxwell for labor secretary

By CHRIS JOHNSON

President-elect Barack Obama this week was reportedly considering nominating an openly gay person to serve as labor secretary.

The Wall Street Journal reported that Obama was considering Mary Beth Maxwell, the founding executive director of American Rights at Work, to head the Labor Department. If nominated, and confirmed by the Senate, she would be the nation's first openly gay cabinet member.

The Journal reported that other officials in consideration for the position were Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D) and Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (D).

Maxwell in 2003 founded American Rights at Work, a non-profit organization that works to modernize laws to improve the conditions of the workforce, according to her biography on the organization's web site. The bio credits her with "finding common ground among diverse groups to solve problems in our nation's antiquated labor-management public policies."

Maxwell, who declined requests Wednesday for comment, is also "a leading voice" for improving the effectiveness of the National Labor Relations Board, an agency that conducts elections for labor union representation and investigates unfair labor practices, the website states.

Originally from Omaha, Neb., Maxwell lives in D.C. with her 7-year-old son, according to her biography, which also states she is "an active member" of the Human Rights Campaign and the Family Equality Council.

HRC President Joe Solmonese endorsed Maxwell for labor secretary in a Dec. 1 letter to Obama.

"Ms. Maxwell's impressive accomplishments in support of workers' rights make me confident in her ability to shape policy and regulations that will strengthen the American workforce," Solmonese wrote.

Solmonese also states in the letter that Maxwell has worked to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act in Congress.

"American Rights at Work and Ms. Maxwell are strong allies in our fight to pass an inclusive ENDA," he said. "Ms. Maxwell clearly understands that the challenges facing our workforce must be solved by including all American citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

Solmonese's letter supporting Maxwell follows a letter that HRC sent Obama advocating Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-Calif.) for the position of labor secretary. Solmonese notes that HRC remains supportive of her candidacy as well.

HRC spokesperson Brad Luna said he expects both Maxwell and Sánchez "would have an impact on ENDA" if either became labor secretary because they support the passage of a trans-inclusive bill.

But, he said, "at the end of the day, what it comes down to is the votes in Congress."

CABINET PICKS COULD IMPACT GAY RIGHTS

Meanwhile, Obama this week nominated several other prominent figures to fill key cabinet positions. The nominees would hold positions that would significantly influence how the administration handles gay issues.

Gays working in the State Department, for example, could benefit from Obama's choice of Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) as secretary of state.

The head of the State Department could change rules on how the department treats the partners of gay Foreign Service officers, who are not entitled to the same benefits as the spouses of straight Foreign Service officers.

Michelle Schohn, head of Gays & Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies, said partners of their gay Foreign Service officers are not included in travel orders, not eligible for health insurance, not entitled to emergency or medical evacuation, and not eligible for more than basic language and security training at the Foreign Service Institute — unlike the spouses of their straight counterparts.

The State Department also provides no help in providing visas for the partners of gay Foreign Service officers, and while the department will pick up travel expenses when moving overseas, including the cost of transporting a pet, the department will not reimburse costs for a domestic partner, she said.

Michael Guest, former U.S. ambassador to Romania, retired from the State Department last year in protest because of these inequities and said they could have been rectified by a rule change from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Guest declined to comment for this article.

Schohn said Clinton could change things by making the partners of gay Foreign Service officers "eligible family members" as opposed to "members of household."

"Senator Clinton can, with the stroke of a pen, grant the families of LGBT employees equality," Schohn said. "I am hopeful that Senator Clinton will see this as a matter of simple fairness and offer the protections to our families that will enable us to continue to serve."

Clinton, whose office did not respond to a request for comment, could also take a stronger stand against countries that commit human rights abuses against gays.

While running for the Democratic presidential nomination, she said she "would be very outspoken about this [issue] and it would be part of American foreign policy."

Another Obama nomination that could affect gays is Defense Secretary Robert Gates, a holdover from the Bush administration.

As head of the Defense Department, Gates would have a voice in deciding how to implement Obama's campaign promise to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," a law approved by Congress in 1993 that prohibits open gays from serving in the military.

Aubrey Sarvis, executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, said he "absolutely" believes that his organization would have a better working relationship with Gates under the Obama administration than it did under the Bush administration.

"I'm anticipating that there will be a more receptive and open Defense Department and that we will have new opportunities to engage with the secretary and his team," he said.

The Defense Department did not respond this week to a request for comment on how Gates would handle Obama's promise to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

While the Washington Times quoted Sarvis as saying that he expects 2009 to be a year for "foundation building and reaching consensus" on the issue of overturning "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Sarvis said the Times did not fully quote him.

"I said it was quite possible that there would be a window for us to move this bill in 2009 if we had the votes lined up, if we had the hearings behind us and the major players were in alignment," he said.

Sarvis said the Times did not include the full quote "because it didn't fit in with their story line."

Mary Beth Maxwell, the founding executive director of American Rights at Work, is reportedly under consideration to serve as labor secretary in the Obama administration. (Photo courtesy of American Rights at Work)

Hate crimes, ENDA top priorities for national gay groups

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Officials with the Human Rights Campaign and National Gay & Lesbian Task Force are hopeful that Barack Obama's administration and Democratic leaders in Congress will help orchestrate the passage next year of two gay rights bills that enjoy widespread support.

The Matthew Shepard Act, which would authorize federal authorities to prosecute anti-gay hate crimes, and the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would ban job discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, are considered high priorities among gay-supportive lawmakers, officials with the two groups said.

"For the first time ever, we will have a president who has been a co-sponsor of both of these bills," said David Stacy, HRC's senior public policy advocate.

President-elect Obama signed on as a sponsor of the two bills during his tenure as a U.S. senator from Illinois.

During his campaign for president, Obama expressed support for nearly all other gay rights legislation pending in Congress, including bills that would provide domestic partnership benefits to federal employees, repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and overturn "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Other pending bills would provide U.S. immigration rights to foreign nationals who are domestic partners of American citizens; provide a tax exemption for employee health insurance benefits for domestic partners, similar to the tax exemption on health benefits given to employees' married spouses; and grant access to Medicaid coverage for people with HIV who don't have AIDS.

"We are trying to assess the best legislative strategy for moving these bills," Stacy said. "But the key people who will be overseeing this in the administration are not in place yet," which has prevented gay advocacy groups from finalizing their plans.

Rea Carey, the Task Force's executive director, said the Task Force also would closely monitor the Obama administration's proposed economic policies and related legislative proposals to make sure gay families aren't excluded.

"We obviously have legislation we've been interested in passing for some time," she said. "But we are part of a bigger picture of the challenges that are facing people in this country.

"The pocketbooks of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are also hurting."

Some activists, including gays who

Please see CONGRESS on Page 13

Gay groups weigh legislative priorities

CONGRESS, continued from **Page 12**

worked on Obama's presidential campaign, have suggested that it would be prudent to hold off on pushing for repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act and overturning "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" during Obama's first year in office.

They point to how President Clinton's decision to propose lifting the military's ban on gay service members in the first months of his presidency in 1993 led to a groundswell of opposition in Congress forced Clinton to agree to "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"The way you move forward is to get members of Congress to pass the first one or two bills," Stacy said. "Then the next tier of bills that are more challenging to move forward can be addressed."

RELATIONSHIP RIGHTS? Stacy and Carey acknowledged that missing from the list of gay-related bills that have been introduced in past years are efforts to provide federal marriage-related rights and benefits to same-sex couples joined by civil unions or domestic partnerships.

In explaining his opposition to same-sex marriage on religious grounds, Obama said during his presidential campaign that he supports providing same-sex couples with all of the rights and benefits that come with marriage. But he did not specify when or how he would achieve this as president.

Legal experts have said a federal-enabling law that recognizes civil unions or domestic partnerships performed by states would be necessary before the couples could receive the more than 1,000 federal rights and benefits that come with marriage.

Experts have also said that repealing DOMA would allow same-sex couples that marry in Massachusetts and Connecticut — the only two states that allow gay marriage — to receive federal rights and benefits of marriage.

But a DOMA repeal would not result in these rights and benefits automatically going to people in civil unions or domestic partnerships because the rights and benefits are restricted to those who are joined by federally recognized marriages, legal experts have said.

"The challenge of same-sex couple recognition is the complexity in its drafting," Stacy said.

He and Carey said their respective groups would consider looking into an enabling law to provide full rights and benefits to same-sex couples who can't marry, but they had no immediate plans for doing this.

Recruiting 'lesbians until graduation' at Agnes Scott

My college topped SoVo's list for LGBT-friendly schools. So why do they allow C-list movies to demean us?

By LOUISA HILL

AGNES SCOTT COLLEGE, THE SUPPOSED WORLD FOR WOMEN, has become the cesspool for Hollywood's C-list sequels. In my four years here, I've had the pleasure of experiencing the filming of such quality films as a remake of "Revenge of the Nerds" and the prequel to "Van Wilder." Our most recent cinematographic credit is "Road Trip II: Beer Pong."

First, let's recognize the irony of a film whose Craigslist recruitment ad seeks extras who are "EXPERIENCED Beer Pong players" being filmed at our Princeton Review-named "Stone-cold Sober" school. More importantly, this movie's reinforcement of sexism, racism, and heterosexism unhesitatingly undermines the college's values and mission to educate women to "live honorably, think deeply, and engage in the intellectual and social challenges of their times."

Although Agnes Scott was tied for Georgia's most LBGTQ-friendly campus by Southern Voice, students eating dinner were recruited in the cafeteria to be extras in the film's derisive "Lesbians until Graduation" scene. The recruiter assured us that the only requirement was "acting like lesbians." But in case we were interested, they welcomed same-sex "background kissers."

When we expressed offense, the recruiter said she was warned about encountering uncooperative students who were "really into being women" (versus into being objects?). When we asked what the scene entailed, the recruiter explained that the main premise of the scene was to portray "lesbians" being together. She continued to describe how the male protagonists stumble upon the room full of these "making-out lesbians" (and presumably "convert" them?).

This recruitment was foreshadowed by a fake bulletin board as part of the movie's props advertising the "exploratory meeting" for their fake college's "Lesbians Until Graduation" club, qualified by statements like "Miss your boyfriend from high school?" which is apparently the only acceptable "excuse" for being a lesbian.

TO UNDERSTAND THE MINDSET BEHIND THESE ACTIONS, LET'S examine how the filmmakers put up signs that said that if we entered certain areas on our campus (including our main quad with our library and humanities building), we were granting the production crew permission to reproduce our images "throughout the universe for all of eternity."

This same utter entitlement to our bodies was reproduced in the way that the production team assumed that just because we were on (our own) campus and that we were women, they could recruit us for this degrading "Lesbians until Graduation" scene.

I wonder if they had been filming a "Gays until Graduation" scene at Morehouse, would someone have gone to their cafeteria asking students if they would want to "act gay," offering them the option of "making out if they were interested?" I doubt it. There's something much more complicated and insidious here.

Unfortunately what this movie is reproducing is a cliché: the tokenizing and eroticizing of lesbianism as existing solely from the absence of men for their sexual enjoyment.

Agnes Scott women already face the insulting stereotype of pillow fighting in silky pajamas. How are we supposed to be taken serious as an academic institution when the production teams stop students from entering the library to study?

FURTHERMORE, THE MOVIE'S CRAIGSLIST AD STATES "PRIMARILY seeking White" and "Attractive Female Model Type" extras, valued at $7.17/hr (be sure to send in your weight!). These racist and sexist standards are clearly visible on the movie's promotional flyer. The flyer shows a headless white woman's body, focusing on her large breasts, barely covered by a shirt that says "Nice Rack." Her pelvis is in front of a triangle of shot glasses. The tagline? "Get your balls wet."

An anonymous group of students protested the film with flyers associating this image with our college's admissions slogan: "Agnes Scott: Who will you become?" These posters were displayed on our quad and in our student center for a few hours before they were removed.

Our school received $30,000 for the filming of this movie on campus. This amount is less than one year's tuition, which means that if only one student stopped coming here because of this film, the school would lose money.

I hope that our administration stops compromising our college's mission statement and reputation as a women's college with these offensive films. If they haven't gotten the message yet, we're just too "into being women" to stand for this objectification any longer.

Louisa Hill is a senior at Agnes Scott College in Decatur. She can be reached through this publication.

'Bashing back' won't help

Bill O'Reilly was right about gay protesters disrupting churches

By STEVE CHARING

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I AGREED WITH BILL O'Reilly's recent assessment that the protest actions taken by a group of gay activists in a Lansing, Mich., church would hurt our cause. Of course, O'Reilly's looking out for us warrants suspicion, but his point is well taken.

We have just experienced one of the most gut-wrenching defeats in our struggle for equality after the nefarious Proposition 8 that banned same-sex marriages in California was approved by voters by a relatively narrow margin on the same night we decisively elected Barack Obama president.

The consequences of Prop. 8 were stunning and tragic. A coalition of religious organizations and social conservatives managed to scare enough voters to restrict marriage to a man and a woman.

Tempting as it may have been to vent frustration and anger, the results do not give license to irate gay people and their supporters to act out their impulses by defacing religious buildings or other targets, as was widely reported. And it is no excuse for a radical queer group, Bash Back!, to disrespectfully disrupt services at Mount Hope Church in Michigan.

According to reports, about 30 gay activists in pink and black garb from the Lansing chapter began shouting during a service on Nov. 9, throwing fliers at the congregation and making out with one another. They reportedly chanted, "It's OK to be gay," and "Jesus was a homo," among other slogans.

It received some media coverage, especially from a delighted Fox News, to heighten Bash Back!'s visibility — a stated goal on its web site.

And with other Bash Back! chapters in such places as Chicago, Memphis, Milwaukee, Denver, Philadelphia, New York and Washington, D.C., we can expect similar outbursts around the country. This doesn't help win friends and influence people, as the saying goes.

BARRING A SURPRISE LEGAL VICTORY IN THE California Supreme Court, our defeat on Prop. 8 will clearly delay the ultimate goal of full marriage equality for those who aren't fortunate enough to live in Massachusetts or Connecticut. It's back to the drawing board where our efforts must be directed toward educating the public, as well as clergy of all denominations, that gay people marrying will not infringe upon their religious beliefs nor will it destroy the institution of marriage.

We must continue to tell our stories to elected officials so that they can see the human side of discrimination. We must explain how continuing to be treated as second-class citizens hurts families.

We must also point out that in Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage has been legal for more than four years, the institution of marriage has not been undermined as the state's divorce rate remains among the lowest in the nation.

This approach works if the politician has an open mind.

ONE OF THE POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE Prop. 8 travesty was the nationwide mobilization of a movement called Join the Impact. In just a few short days of grassroots organizing and effective use of the Internet's social networking sites, the campaign on Nov. 15 turned out hundreds of thousands of demonstrators across the country from Atlanta to Seattle to peacefully and resolutely march in support of our goal of marriage equality.

"Our mission is to encourage our community to engage our opposition in a conversation about full equality and to do this with respect, dignity and an attitude of outreach and education," says the Join The Impact mission statement on Facebook.

The tactics used by Bash Back!, on the other hand, will only serve to alienate moderate citizens and embolden right wing conservatives to continue their attacks on us as out of the mainstream and to generate fear of gays.

Our ultimate victory, whenever that will be, will be won at the ballot box and in the legislatures. Elected officials will vote according to the wishes of their constituents. We need to make our case and convince them respectfully.

Allowing Bill O'Reilly and others to whip up anger against us because of radicalism will stop us cold.

Steve Charing is a freelance writer and can be reached via SteveCharing.blogspot.com.

soapbox

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SOUND OFF

SoVo readers speak out on sex — and our Sex Issue

Re: "The queer side of gay sex" (news, Nov. 14)

That was a really interesting article. I work frequently with gay men, selling sex toys, and I love that the guys I sell to are normally such an open-minded and free-spirited bunch!

Great story. Spot on about gay men and straight men relative to sex. One thing was inaccurate though. Poppers are not just a gay phenomenon. It's likely that more straights use them than gays (though a much larger percentage of gay men use them than straight men). One thing's for sure: they really do greatly enhance the sexual experience for both women and men. Keep up the good work guys!

Re: "AIDS impacted gay sexual norms, overall relationships" (news, Nov. 14)

How widespread is this phenomenon — the strategy of "Let's get tested together before we have sex, for a variety of STDS." Sexual health checkups reduce ambiguity/risks and can be like anything else potential sex partners might do together.

Re: "What do lesbians do in bed, anyway?" (news, Nov. 14)

Interesting survey, especially those fisting and oral-anal contact numbers surprised me.

Gays 'trying to run before we walk' on road to equality

Re: "The arrogance of white gays" (Viewpoint by Herndon Davis, Nov. 14)

I agree, our community is trying to run before we walk. It won't take 100 years, but we first have to come out to everyone, everywhere. That being said, Herndon, what did you do to "get out the vote"? I agree that our community is often not representative of the people in it, but where are all of the different people when it comes time to make a stand? I'm finger pointing and that's not productive; what is productive is stepping up, taking personal responsibility for what went wrong (by all people on all sides) and fixing it. So vote, rally, protest, organize and volunteer!

THE Q Online

Some activists are promoting 'Day Without a Gay' on Dec. 10, when gay people are urged to 'call in gay' and stay home from work, not spend money and volunteer instead. Will you participate?

- Yes. I think this is a great way to show the contributions of gay people in our society. 14%
- Yes. Even if it doesn't work, I'll get a day off! 0%
- No. My employer is gay-friendly; this would just hurt someone who already helps us. 55%
- No. In this economy, I don't want to do anything that could risk my job. 25%
- I'm not sure. 6%

Visit www.sovo.com to cast your vote in a new Q every week!

MAILBOX

Coming out risky for everyone, not just black lesbians and gays

To the Editors:

Re: "The arrogance of white gays" (Viewpoint by Herndon Davis, Nov. 14)

I would never even presume to think I have any idea of what oppression is like for an African-American, particularly a gay or lesbian African-American. Yet there were two points in the article by Herndon Davis with which I do take issue:

First, the length of time it takes for the oppression of one group of people to be addressed is never a proper justification for the length of time oppression for another group should take to be addressed. If anything, we should be striving together to help insure that all forms of oppression for whatever reason are addressed and brought to an end as soon as possible.

The fact that one group had to wait for centuries or even decades should not be justification for another group to have to wait for any specifiable amount of time. All oppression is wrong and should be ended as fast as we can end it.

Second, I have listened for a couple of decades now to how much more it costs people of color to go public about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. While I do not mean to be disrespectful, I do not buy that argument.

When any one of us comes out about our sexual orientation, the cost is the same. It could/can/might/has cost us our employment, our familial relationships, our faith community relationships, or most any other type of relationship we can think of that might be in jeopardy.

Race, gender, ethnicity and the like do not change those potential outcomes. We all face the same possibilities. There may be other factors involved, but that would be true for all of us. The bottom line is that coming out is almost always costly to every single one of us.

Rather than trying to find parameters to use to make it different for some, why don't we work on making it easier for all of us? Closets are not healthy places for human beings. May we strive for the day when there will be no need for a closet except to contain clothing.

BRUCE GARNER
Atlanta

THE Q

What TV show would you like to see turned into a movie?

"'Gimme a Break,' because I sure need one."
Jill Sutton, 28
Grant Park

"'Queer as Folk,' because I miss the TV show, and we need a movie full of hot men."
Hulon Yancey, 31
Vinings

"'Dexter,' because I enjoy it as a program so I think a movie would be great."
Dave Dikes, 40
Midtown

"They turned a show I like into a movie: 'Noah's Arc.' There really weren't shows that I've seen that gave an overall perspective of the black gay community, and so I think 'Noah's Arc' gave a different perspective of us as a group."
Dana Terell, 39
Southwest Atlanta

"'Ugly Betty.' I just think it's so much like work a lot. It's always a hoot, and they're so creative and original. I just think that's the cutest show on TV."
Jerry Henderson, 42
Dalton

Compiled by Ryan Lee

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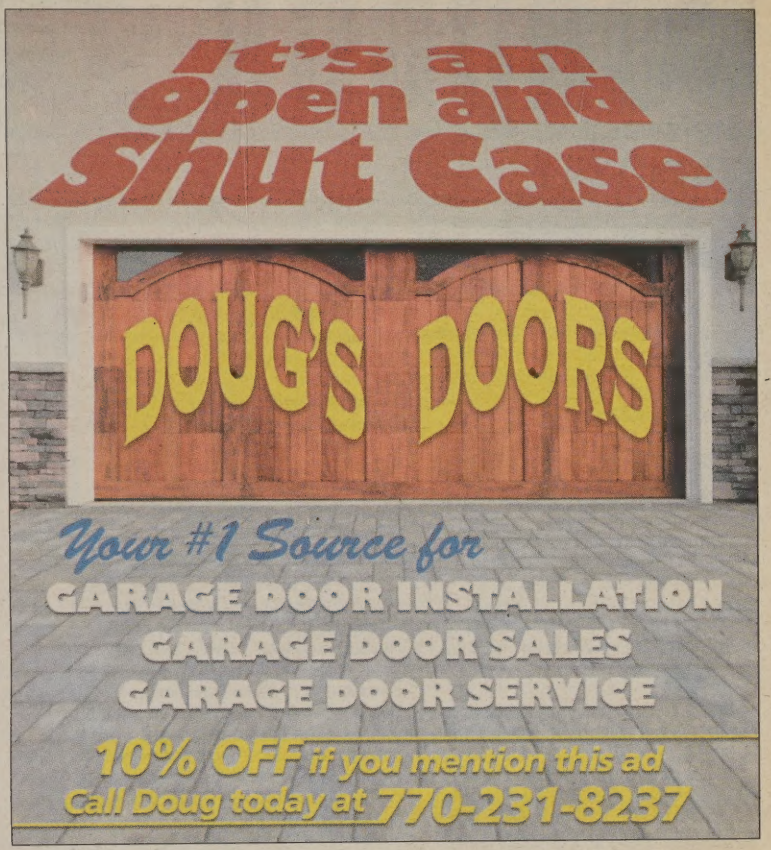
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SOUTHERN VOICE COMMUNITY

FRIDAY, DEC. 5

AID Atlanta celebrates the first anniversary of **Evolution**, a community-based center for young, same-gender-loving, African-American men. 6-8 p.m. at Atrium, 236 Auburn Ave. RSVP by Dec. 3 to Jon Santos, jon.santos@aidatlanta.org

SATURDAY, DEC. 6

Asians & Friends Atlanta spread the holiday cheer at their annual **Christmas Party**, an intimate affair hosted by a member couple. 7 p.m. at Jim and Sean's house. Directions will be e-mailed to attendees, www.aeatlanta.com to RSVP

SUNDAY, DEC. 7

Local lesbian attorney Barbara Katz joins Zami to present **Marriage, Civil Unions & Domestic Partnerships: Legal Information**. 3-5 p.m. at Auburn Avenue Research Library, 101 Auburn Ave. 404-730-4001, www.zami.org

TUESDAY, DEC. 9

The first meeting/open house for the new group **Mid-Georgia Pride** is open to everyone who wants input into the group's first annual Pride event in 2009. 7-9 p.m. at The Cadillac II Nightclub, 415 Commercial Circle in Warner Robins, GA. 478-320-4732, www.midgeorgiapride.com

Join Georgia Equality, Lambda Legal, Amnesty International and the International Gay & Lesbian Association for **"From Prop. 8 to Yogyakarta: LGBT Rights are Human Rights."** The panel discussion marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. 7 p.m. at Danneman's Coffee Shop, 466 Edgewood Ave. 404-876-5661

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10

The **Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** hosts its **Holiday Party** replete with raffle prizes all night. 7-9 p.m. at the Wine Loft, 300 Marietta St. 404-377-4258, www.aglccserver.com

THURSDAY, DEC. 11

The **Atlanta Executive Network** toasts a fabulous **Holiday Party** and mixer with special holiday cocktails. 6-8 p.m. at Trois, 1180 Peachtree St. 404-815-3337, www.aen.org

ON THE WEB:
For other calendars of special events, visit www.sovo.com.

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Calling all soldiers

New organization seeks to tap black gay Atlanta's political power

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com

WHETHER LISTENING TO BARACK OBAMA'S Grant Park victory speech on election night, or seeing the thousands of people who rallied around the country in opposition to California's Proposition 8, gay progressives have many reasons to be inspired since the election.

But after the speeches end and the candlelight vigils burn out, an obvious question remains: Now what?

"Let's celebrate our successes, but let's also roll up our sleeves and get to work," says gay activist Craig Washington, who felt the urge to "take advantage of the momentum of Obama's election."

The day after Obama's victory, Washington sent an e-mail to leading black gay and lesbian activists in Atlanta about the need to capitalize on the energy created by the historic election. The e-mail also warned people not to get lost in giddiness over Obama's win.

"At the same time, I saw indicators of more backlash, more homophobia and more backpedaling on some of the progress that had been made," Washington says, noting the passage of Prop. 8, a gay adoption ban in Arkansas and an anti-affirmative action measure in Nebraska.

"I didn't want that [enthusiasm over Obama's victory] to lead to complacency," Washington says.

One of the e-mail recipients, Mary Anne Adams, organized a conference call that led to the creation of the Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition.

"We want to do something as a community to have an impact on the issues that we care about," says Rev. Maressa Pendermon, a founding member of the coalition. "It's certainly my personal hope that we become a place where people can come and know that we are on the pulse of what's happening in the community."

THE ATLANTA BLACK LGBT COALITION IS attempting to find the right balance between offering strong leadership while not dictating a top-down agenda.

"I think what black queer folks specifically are looking for is leadership and direction," Washington says. "While Atlanta is overall a progressive city, I think there's a lot of untapped potential."

The coalition hopes to help articulate goals for black gay men and lesbians in Atlanta, including through community meetings where an overall agenda is hammered out.

"We definitely want to see a more intentional, cohesive voice around the political agenda," Pendermon says. "Many of our issues are the same as all LGBT folks, but we may prioritize things differently."

Despite its large size and powerful reputation, Atlanta's black gay and lesbian population hasn't regularly mobilized around political and social justice issues.

"There are many individuals who are active, but we don't have a body that provides consistent black queer political engagement," Washington says. "Most black gay folks in Atlanta are closeted and are not ready for activism that may result in them being outed. Even still, people are ready for change, and they don't want to live in fear for the rest of their lives; but if someone doesn't do something, a majority of them will.

"A lot of us are not willing to risk anything for it," Washington adds. "Freedom and progressive change take risks, sometimes loss, and so I'm hoping that there's a critical mass of folks that are ready.

"Our goal is to identify those folks who are ready now," he says. "Ready to pick-up a bullhorn, or to at least show up at a rally if not organize one, or to use their skills — whether it's fundraising, or designing a fab website."

MUCH OF THE MISSION AND VISION FOR THE Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition remains uncertain, as organizers plan to seek community input. Along with gay issues, the coalition also wants to address social justice concerns such as affordable housing, living wages for workers and better access to healthcare for people living with HIV.

The coalition's first action was its endorsement of Democrat Jim Martin in his runoff election with Republican U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss. The endorsement was designed to get the candidate and obscure runoff on more black gay voters' radars, as well as introduce a black gay voice into Georgia's political discussions, Washington says.

While the Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition will have a heavy political component, organizers also hope it will incorporate social events and wellness initiatives.

"One of the places where I think we have been missing in action, as a group of leaders, is we haven't really been intentional in our focus on youth, on young people who end up in this city in droves, and the many who wind up facing desperate situations," Pendermon says.

Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition
404-790-5884

Craig Washington is one of the founding members of the Atlanta Black LGBT Coalition, a new group that seeks to mobilize black gay men and lesbians around political issues. (Photo by Bo Shell)

Falcons player apologizes for AIDS remarks

SOVO FLASHBACK

An Atlanta Falcons player angered some listeners of a popular morning radio show in 2003 when he made disparaging comments about AIDS on World AIDS Day.

Defensive end Patrick Kerney, a Falcon since 1999, issued an apology two days after questioning why there isn't also a "World Cancer Day" and saying sarcastically, "People who get cancer — it's usually their fault" though "AIDS — it's just bad luck" during his weekly on-air visit to WKLS 96 Rock's morning shock jocks, the Regular Guys — Larry Wachs and Eric Van Haessler.

In a statement after being asked about the comments by Southern Voice, the player apologized.

"During a recent radio program, I made some comments which may have offended some of the listeners," Kerney said in the statement. "It was never my intent to do so. I did not mean to make light of any life threatening illnesses. I apologize if anyone was upset."

The radio station, 96 Rock, did not apologize because station officials believe the statements were not anti-gay, according to Tim Dukes, program director for 96 Rock.

The Regular Guys were fired Oct. 23, 2006, from WKLS 96 Rock for the second time in three years. The duo, long criticized as homophobic by some gay listeners, were dismissed from their morning show over a prank in which they broadcast two fellow DJs in the bathroom.

In January 2008, Wachs and Van Haessler were hired as the Regular Guys on 100.5 FM. Kerney now plays with the Seattle Seahawks.

Southern Voice, Dec. 5, 2003

Former WKLS 96 Rock 'Regular Guy' **Eric Van Haessler** (File photo)

ATL SPORTS CALENDAR

THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, DEC. 5

Come Out Dancing, Salsa Dancing at Pura Vida and lessons in studio, Several Dancers Core Studio. For other dance opportunities throughout the week, comeoutdancing.com

Friends Friday Bowling League, 6:30 -9 p.m. League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.friendsfriday.org

Hotlanta Volleyball League, 7:30-10 p.m. Recreational League Play, Agnes Scott College. See www.hotlantavolleyball.org for registration info.

SATURDAY, DEC. 6

Front Runners Atlanta, 8 a.m., Weekly Run, Lullwater to Piedmont Park. http://frontrunnersatlanta.org

Atlanta Bucks Rugby Ruck & Maul Pageant. 6:30-9 p.m., Bucks do Broadway at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-687-9466, www.atlantabucksrugby.org

SUNDAY, DEC. 7

Lambda Bowling League, 1:30 p.m., League Play, Midtown Bowl. igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=85

MONDAY, DEC. 8

Front Runners Atlanta, 7-8 p.m., Weekly Run, Candler Park to Studioplex.

Southern Line Dancing, 7-9 p.m., Weekly Dancing, Wild Mustang. www.southernline.org

Hotlanta Squares, 7-9 p.m., Beginner Classes. 9-10 p.m., Plus Classes, First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta, www.iagsdc.org/hotlanta

TUESDAY, DEC. 9

Atlanta Rainbow Trout, 8-9:30 p.m., Swimming and Water Polo Practice, Georgia Tech. atlantarainbowtrout.com

Atlas Atlanta Bowling League, League Play, Midtown Bowl. www.igbo.org/leagues/League_Detail.cfm?LID=78

Hotlanta Volleyball League, 7:30-10 p.m., Intermediate and Advanced League Play, Agnes Scott College. www.hotlantavolleyball.org

Hotlanta Squares, 7-10 p.m., Square Dancing Classes, First Metropolitan Community Church of Atlanta. www.iagsdc.org/hotlanta

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 10

Front Runners Atlanta, 6:30 p.m., Weekly Run, Centennial Olympic Park to Piedmont Park.

Hotlanta Soccer. 10:15 p.m., Hotlanta Heat game; 10:35 p.m., Hotlanta Blaze. Atlanta Silverbacks Park. www.hotlantasoccer.com

THURSDAY, DEC. 11

Atlanta Rainbow Trout, 8-9:30 p.m., Swimming Practice, Georgia Tech.

Come Out Dancing. Line Dance Lessons at Wild Mustang and 3Legged Cowboy. www.comeoutdancing.com

Decatur Women's Sports League. 6 p.m., Basketball league play. Decatur Recreation Center, 231 Sycamore St. www.decaturwomenssportsleague.info

Hotlanta Softball League Holiday Party. 7-10 p.m., Bring unwrapped gift to Bellissima, 560-B Amsterdam Ave. 404-917-8220, myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

TO ADD A LISTING... *e-mail matt@gaytlsports.com or call 678-519-0543.*

Out on the gridiron

Sports writer visits Atlanta with tale of gay teen athlete

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **SPORTS** DYANA BAGBY

AS A GAY TEEN PLAYING HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL, Bill Konigsberg eventually had to make a decision for himself — come out and quit the sport, or stay in the closet and continue playing.

His senior year, he came out and gave up playing a game he loved.

"I couldn't figure out how to do both," Konigsberg says. "There were no role models. My response was to stop playing. I joined the drama club where I knew I would be accepted ... and it's a decision I've regretted."

Konigsberg is the author of the new novel for young adults "Out of the Pocket," about a gay high school quarterback. He reads and signs his book at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse on Dec. 9.

The protagonist, 17-year-old Bobby Framingham of Orange County, Calif., faces a dilemma similar to Konigsberg. The star quarterback and one of the best players in the state is struggling with the secret he's gay.

"This was a pretty natural place for me to go," Konigsberg says. "Being an openly gay sportswriter gave me fertile ground. It unfurled for me."

HOMOPHOBIA IN SPORTS IS HARDLY A NEW phenomenon. No professional athlete has come out while playing in the NBA, NFL, MLB or NHL, although several have come out after they've retired.

"Sports and the military are the last bastions where homophobia is acceptable," Konigsberg says. "It's not a mistake there is not an openly gay athlete in professional sports. It's all about masculinity — and men are so fiercely protective of this last bastion of masculinity."

Konigsberg, however, continued to participate in the world of sports as an adult as a noted sports writer for ESPN.com and the Associated Press. While working as an assistant editor at ESPN.com in 2001, Konigsberg decided to again come out — on the front page of the website in an article titled "Sports World Still a Struggle for Gays?" which won him a GLAAD Media Award in 2002.

Konigsberg quit writing sports for the AP in September to concentrate on his book tour and to work on his second novel.

And while "Out of the Pocket" is not autobiographical, Konigsberg says he takes many of his experiences as a teen and adult to create the characters in the book.

"Bobby and I have a lot in common, although he is much more confident than I ever was," Konigsberg says. "The teenage years are such traumatic years and I wanted to reach teenagers with this book."

In some ways, the book was like transcribing his experience of coming out at ESPN.com, Konigsberg says. But in the book, Framingham does not have to quit the sport he loves because of who he is.

The story of Framingham's coming out is also different than Konigsberg's experience. While Konigsberg came out on his own, Framingham is outed involuntarily after telling a few close friends who then tell other friends and so on.

"I created a character who was not ready to come out, but he starts by telling some people. His outing happens organically as they begin telling others and the ball gets rolling and things got away from his control," he says.

NOVELS FOR YOUNG ADULTS CAN SOMETIMES take a dark turn as the teen characters grapple with serious issues. And while Konigsberg originally planned to write "Out of the Pocket" as a tragedy, strong editing led him to realize that a teen novel dealing with a gay character did not have to be too depressing.

"When I started writing I thought this book would be very dark. But this didn't have to be dark and I reevaluated whether it was a tragedy or not," he says. "It's much more helpful reading when I backed up from the melodramatic."

Gay sportswriter **Bill Konigsberg** comes to Atlanta to read from his debut young adult novel, 'Out of the Pocket,' about a gay high school quarterback. (Photo courtesy Konigsberg)

Today, gay teens have many more role models than when Konigsberg was growing up. There was even a gay sports writer on the hit TV show "Will & Grace," he points out.

Now as he travels on his book tour, including stops at high schools and in front of young adult audiences, Konigsberg says he gets mostly positive feedback from the readers.

"Touring has been an amazing experience. I get the sense I'm helping people — this is the most amazing thing that's happened in my life," he says. "I really wanted to write a book I wished I could've read 20 years ago. I know this book will be helpful."

Bill Konigsberg
Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.
Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
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www.outwritebooks.com

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DEC. 5 - DEC. 13

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FRIDAY DEC. 5

This year's **Atlanta Women's Holiday Ball** benefits the Women's Resource Center, the Partnership Against Domestic Violence, and the Atlanta Lesbian Health Initiative. 8 p.m. at Druid Hills Golf Club, 740 Clifton Road. 404-872-7730, www.awhb.org

Multiple Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter and acoustic guitar master **Jessi Lynn** plays Bellissima. 9-10 p.m. at 560-B Amsterdam Ave. 404-917-0220, www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

FRIDAY DEC. 5 – **SATURDAY** DEC. 6

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra begins its holiday repertoire with performances of **Handel's Messiah** and **ASO Gospel Christmas**. Messiah: 8 p.m. on Saturday, Gospel: 8 p.m. Friday and 2 p.m. Saturday. Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree St. 404-733-5000, www.atlantasymphony.org

SATURDAY DEC. 6

Atlanta Rugby Bucks presents the **2008 Miss Ruck & Maul Pageant, 'Bucks on Broadway,'** featuring rugby players in drag. 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-844-8800, atlantabucksrugby.org

The **Winter Party Festival Kickoff** features DJ/Producer **Yinon Yahel**, vocalist **Maya**, hostess Nicole Paige Brooks and performer Janelle Paige Brooks. 11 p.m. at Jungle, 2115 Faulkner Road. 404-844-8800, www.2gethaproductions.com

SATURDAY DEC. 6 – **SUNDAY** DEC. 7

Bungalows are featured this year on the **Virginia Highland Tour of Homes**. Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 12-5 p.m. 404-467-9922, vahihometour.org

SUNDAY DEC. 7

The sixth annual **Toy Party** benefits more than a dozen children's agencies. Bring a toy worth $15 or more for admission to an open bar, a silent auction and one of the biggest gay events of the year. 5:30 -9 p.m at AmericasMart 3, 240 Peachtree St. 800-285-6278, www.forthekid.org

The **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus** previews their 2008 holiday show, **'All Spruced Up: And Know Where to Go!'** 3 p.m. at Kennesaw State University, 1000 Chastain Road, Kennesaw. 770-423-6650, www.kennesaw.interticket.com

Singer **Dianne Durrett** plays an acoustic show to celebrate the release of her book 'Driving Music City,' which recounts her days as a high-profile limousine driver in Nashville. 3 p.m. at Eddie's Attic, 515-B North McDonough St. 404-377-4976, www.eddiesattic.com

FILE PHOTO

FRIDAY DEC. 5 – **SATURDAY** DEC. 6

OurSong, Atlanta's gay and lesbian chorus, presents the **Holiday Spice Concert** featuring Christmas and Chanukah favorites. Bring canned food for the Atlanta Community Food Bank. 8 p.m. at Grace United Methodist Church, 458 Ponce de Leon Ave. 404-542-3025, www.oursongatlanta.com

PHOTO COURTESY RIGHT ON RECORDS

SUNDAY DEC. 7

Lesbian musician **Melissa Ferrick** rocks Little 5 Points to promote her recent release, 'Goodbye Youth.' 7:30 p.m. at The Five Spot, 1123 Euclid Ave. 404-223-1100, www.fivespot-atl.com

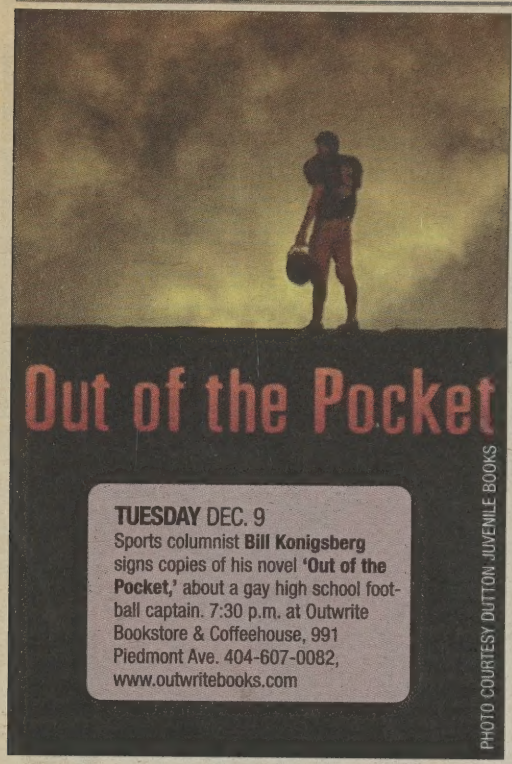

PHOTO COURTESY DUTTON JUVENILE BOOKS

TUESDAY DEC. 9
Sports columnist **Bill Konigsberg** signs copies of his novel **'Out of the Pocket,'** about a gay high school football captain. 7:30 p.m. at Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, 991 Piedmont Ave. 404-607-0082, www.outwritebooks.com

MONDAY DEC. 8
Southern Voice and David magazine sponsor a prix-fixe **Fundraiser Dinner** for the Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus with live performances by the **AGMC Panache Ensemble** while you eat. Make dinner reservations at Mosaic Restaurant, 3097 Maple Drive. 404-320-1030, www.agmchorus.org

THURSDAY DEC. 11 – **SATURDAY** DEC. 13
More than 400 musicians collaborate to continue a 50-year-old tradition for **Christmas with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**. 8 p.m. Thursday to Saturday, plus a 2 p.m. Saturday matinee, at Atlanta Symphony Hall, 1280 Peachtree St., 404-733-4900, www.atlantasymphony.org

FRIDAY DEC. 12
Atlanta-based **Sonia Leigh**, who has been compared to Melissa Etheridge, Lucinda Williams and a 'country-fied' Joan Jett, stops by home from the tour supporting 'Run or Surrender.' 8 p.m. at Eddie's Attic, 515-B North McDonough St. 404-377-4976, www.eddiesattic.com

Michelle Sewell, editor of the travelogue **'Just Like A Girl: A Manifesta!'** hosts a 'sizzling, provocative, and boundary pushing reading' with book contributors Julie Senger, JScale and Lisa Joyner. 8-9:30 p.m. at Charis Books & More, 1180 Euclid Ave. 404-524-0304, www.charisbooksandmore.com

FRIDAY DEC. 12 – **SATURDAY** DEC. 13
The **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus** performs its 2008 holiday concert **'All Spruced Up: And Know Where to Go!'** 8 p.m. with a 2 p.m. matinee on Saturday, at the Cathedral of St. Philip, 2744 Peachtree Road. 404-320-1030, www.agmchorus.org

SATURDAY DEC. 13
Celebrate the holidays with Georgia's group for gay-led families at the second **MEGA Family Project Winter Wonderland Party**. 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at St. Mark United Methodist Church, 781 Peachtree Street. 404-808-3350, www.megafamilyproject.org

SATURDAY DEC. 13
Tour houses with mood lighting on the **Grant Park Candlelight Tour of Homes**. 6-10 p.m. beginning in the sanctuary of St. Paul United Methodist Church, 501 Grant St. 404-688-7501, www.grantpark.org

upcoming

Visit **www.sovo.com** for expanded calendars and organization listings covering nightlife, sports, spirituality and health.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					DEC. 5 Atlanta Symphony Orchestra **Gospel Christmas.** atlantasymphony.org	**DEC. 6** Atlanta Bucks' **Ruck & Maul Pageant.** www.atlantabucksrugby.org
DEC. 7 **Virginia-Highland Tour of Homes.** www.vahihometour.org **Toy Party.** www.forthekid.org	**DEC. 8** **Heretic 17th Anniversary Party** by invitation only. www.hereticatlanta.com	**DEC. 9** Sports writer **Bill Konigsberg** at Outwrite with new novel. www.outwritebooks.com	**DEC. 10** PALS Bingo **'CHRISTMASHANAKUZAKA.'** www.palsatlanta.org	**DEC. 11** **Atlanta Executive Network** holiday party at Trois. www.aen.org	**DEC. 12** **Sonia Leigh** at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com	**DEC. 13** **Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus holiday show.** www.agmchorus.org
DEC. 14 **Cowboy Envy** at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com	**DEC. 15** **Gender Crossing.** Trans support group. www.gendercrossing.org	**DEC. 16** **Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce** new member breakfast. www.aglccserver.org	**DEC. 17** **Wealth Management** for Domestic Partners seminar. RSVP: 770-858-1204	**DEC. 18** **Caroline Aiken** and others at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com	**DEC. 19** **Blind Boys of Alabama** at Atlanta Symphony Hall. www.atlantasymphony.org	**DEC. 20** **A Very Merry Holiday Pops** at Atlanta Symphony Hall. www.atlantasymphony.org
DEC. 21 **Salvation Sunday brunch** at Maxim Prime. www.socialatl.com	**DEC. 22** **Dragamaki with Bubba** at Nickiemoto's. nickiemotosmidtown.com	**DEC. 23** **Comedy Night** at Eddie's Attic with Alyssa Barnett. www.eddiesattic.com	**DEC. 24** Unity Christ Center **Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.** www.unitychristcenter.org	**DEC. 25** **Merry Christmas!**	**DEC. 26** **Drivin N Cryin** at Center Stage. www.ticketmaster.com	**DEC. 27** **Brian Webb** and **Rebecca Loebe** at Eddie's Attic. www.eddiesattic.com
DEC. 28 **Salsa Sunday Latin Night** at Bellissima. www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge	**DEC. 29** **Boys singles night** at Paris Decatur. www.parisdecatur.com	**DEC. 30** **Cirque Dreams: Jungle Fantasy** at Cobb Energy Center. cobbenergycenter.com	**DEC. 31** **DJ Don Bishop** at Jungle. wildmustangatlanta.com **DJ Joe Gauthreaux** at the Georgian Terrace. www.c2production.biz **Sonia Leigh** at Bellissima.	**JAN. 1** **Happy New Year!**	**JAN. 2** **Cirque du Soleil 'Kooza'** at Atlantic Station. www.cirquedusoleil.com	**JAN. 3** **'The L Word'** at Bellissima. www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

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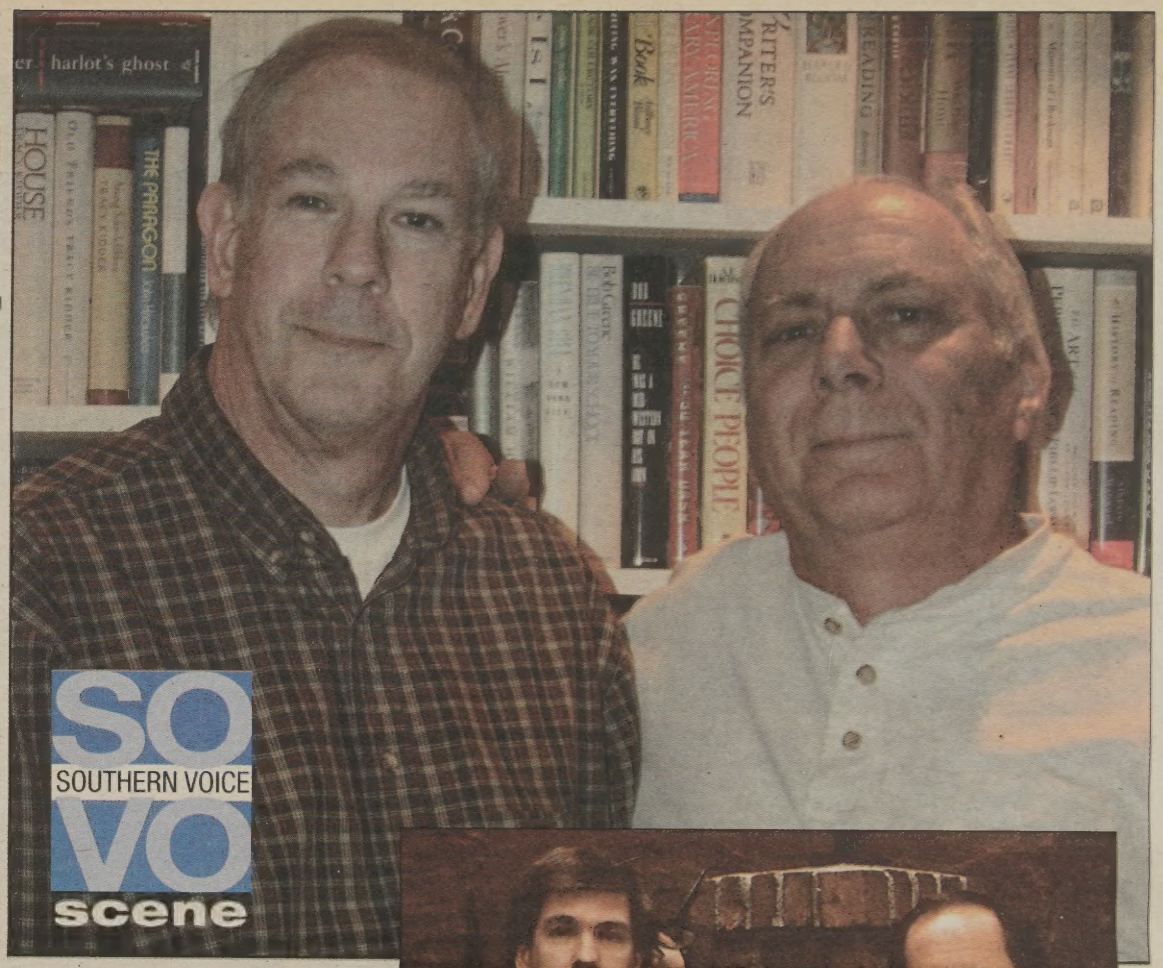
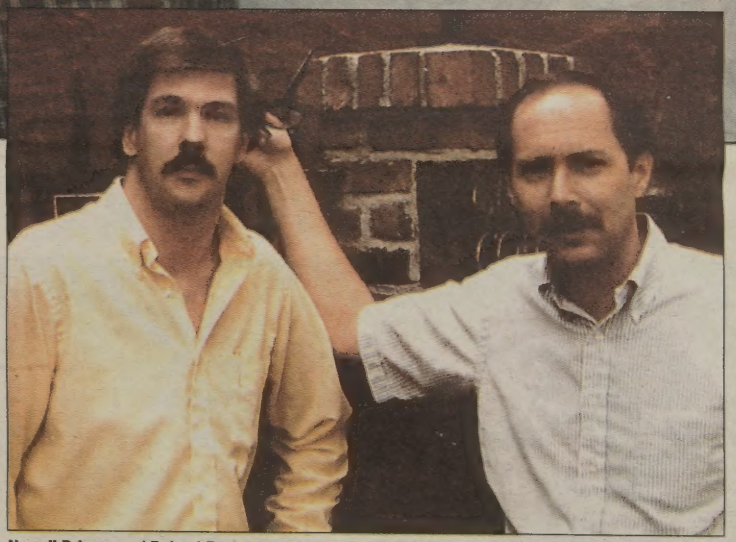
30 YEARS OF LOVE

Atlanta gay couple defy the odds by celebrating three decades together

By RYAN LEE
rlee@sovo.com





Nowell Briscoe and **Roland Farrar** moved in together in October 1978, and recently celebrated 30 years as a couple. (Photos by Bo Shell and courtesy of Briscoe and Farrar)

NOWELL BRISCOE HAD DEVELOPED A PESSIMISTIC attitude toward dating by the time he stepped inside his favorite gay spot on July 3, 1976. Finding a lover wasn't on his agenda as he prepared to celebrate the nation's bicentennial at the former restaurant and bar known as Shelly's.

"I had already determined and made my mind up that I was going to grow old by myself," says Briscoe, 62. "And while that's not something I particularly relished doing, with the way that most gay relationships went, I felt like I would rather be by myself and be unhappy than be in a relationship and be miserable."

While sitting at the bar at Shelly's, Briscoe saw one of his co-workers, who was in a matchmaking mood. The co-worker and his partner were hosting their friend Roland Farrar, who traveled from Clearwater, Fla., to Atlanta to spend his final weekend in the states before starting an 18-month telecommunications job in Nigeria.

Although Farrar was a little shy, he and Briscoe began talking, shared a couple of dances and "being a proper Southern gentleman, I asked him if he would like to come over to my apartment and extend the evening, which he did," Briscoe says.

The two enjoyed their time together, but Farrar's impending departure gave the experience the feeling of a one-night stand.

"I thought, well, I'll never see him again," Briscoe recalls.

Farrar and Briscoe began writing to each other, and when it was time for Farrar to return to the U.S., Farrar already knew he wanted to live in Atlanta instead of Clearwater.

"It was obvious that opportunities in industry were much greater in Atlanta, which was just coming into its own," says Farrar, 67, who moved into Briscoe's Buford Highway apartment in October 1978.

"All I can say is if you love the person, stick with them through thick and thin, and down the road you'll be glad you did."

– Nowell Briscoe

"We started off sort of like roommates in a way, but we had common interests in music and things, and we weren't that far apart in age," says Farrar, who can't pinpoint an exact moment when the couple transitioned from friends to partners who celebrated their 30th anniversary this fall.

"I think these sort of things just happen," he says. "I don't know if they're really preconceived; I think it just kind of evolves a little bit, at least it did for us."

THINGS EVOLVED IN BRISCOE AND FARRAR'S relationship at a "magical" moment.

After nearly a year of living together on Buford Highway, Farrar and Briscoe went house hunting and purchased "the worst house on the street" in a neighborhood near Emory. The two figured the house would serve as a starter home, and were attracted to the area because several gay couples already lived on the same street.

"Two guys just don't go living together anywhere they wanted to back in the '70s," Farrar says. "I knew that we weren't going to try to go into a straight neighborhood and pretend to be fine."

While the gay neighbors helped create a safe space for Briscoe and Farrar to live,

Please see **COUPLE** on **Page 34**

Dance fever, Page 24 • Rebel Rimbaud, Page 28 • December at Bellissima, Page 31

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Holiday home tours celebrate the season

SO SOUTHERN VOICE VO SCENE IN BRIEF

A gay-owned bungalow near Piedmont Park will be part of this weekend's Virginia-Highland Tour of Homes, as the venerable neighborhood pays homage to part of its history.

"This year, we were most interested in pursuing homes that represent the roots of the Tour of Bungalows back in the early 1970s," says Charlie LeFort, co-chair of the Tour of Homes, which takes place Dec. 6-7.

Six homes comprise the Virginia-Highland tour of homes, including the Elmwood Drive residence of Mark Seib and Chris Gorman. The couple is preparing to showcase renovations made two years ago that included an expanded first floor and a new second floor.

The Virginia-Highland Tour of Homes also features food tastings from some of the neighborhood's trendiest eateries, and for the first time includes a silent art auction. All proceeds from the tour and affiliated events go toward acquiring land for a new park at the corner of North Highland and St. Charles avenues.

Intown dwellers can also get into the festive spirit with the Grant Park Candlelight Tour of Homes, Dec. 13-14. In addition to nine homes and the Neo-Romanesque St. Paul United Methodist Church sanctuary, the tour also features a Winter Wonderland for children on Dec. 13, and an artists market on both days.

– Ryan Lee

The Virginia-Highland Tour of Homes features six residences, including this gay-owned bungalow near Piedmont Park.

Virginia-Highland Tour of Homes
Dec. 6-7, $20-$25
404-467-9922, ext. 301
www.vahihometour.org

Grant Park Candlelight Tour of Homes
Dec. 13-14, $12-$15
404-688-7501
www.candlelighttourofhomes.com

Charis hosts GirlChild 'Manifesta!' writer/publisher

Lesbian author and publisher Michelle Sewell stops by Charis Books & More on Dec. 12 to show off her new anthology "Just Like a Girl: A Manifesta!" The book, a collection of stories that examine being a woman, includes work by three Atlanta authors: Julie Senger, JScale and Lisa Joyner, who will also attend the reading.

"Michelle is both a fabulous writer and organizer," says Kerrie Lynn, co-director of Charis Circle, which cosponsors the event with ZAMI. "The work she is doing with GirlChild Press, to pull together voices, especially African-American women, is just so phenomenal."

Sewell founded her GirlChild publishing house to give women a forum to write about their experiences and inspire those without a voice. "Just Like a Girl" is the second book from GirlChild. "Growing Up Girl: An Anthology from Marginalized Spaces" was published in 2006, and also contained work from Atlanta authors.

GirlChild is now collecting submissions for its third anthology, "Woman's Work: The Short Stories."

– Matt Schafer

Michelle Sewell
Dec. 12, 8 p.m.
Charis Books & More 1189 Euclid Avenue
404-524 0304, www.charis.booksense.com

DJs want to recapture gay Atlanta's party past

Alan Collins is busy. As the general manager of the Heretic and the driving force behind the DeKalb County after-hours club the Bodyshop, he continues his effort to energize Atlanta's waning nightlife scene. On the heels of the Heretic's 17th anniversary event on Dec. 8, Collins and his two home bases play host to two major dance events on Dec. 13 with traveling DJs Ralphi Rosario and Billy Carroll.

Rosario kicks off the night at the Heretic, and Carroll, a former Atlanta boy who is now based in New York, brings his new CD and "Dirty Beats" tour to the Bodyshop's late night crowd.

"We think it's like stepping back in time, even before WETbar, before your lovely mayor turned back the bar hours," Carroll says. "We're trying to capture what Blü was, what Backstreet was, when that late scene could keep you playing until 8 o'clock in the morning."

Carroll's new album, which will be on full display at the Bodyshop, attempts to revisit darker, underground party sounds.

"It's definitely not a primetime selection of songs," he says. "It's not anthem-y or pop. Tell your readers to get out from behind that computer monitor and move their ass a little bit."

– Mike Fleming

DJ Ralphi Rosario
Dec. 13, 10 p.m.
Heretic

'Dirty Beats' tour w/
DJ Billy Carroll
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www.bodyshopatlanta.com

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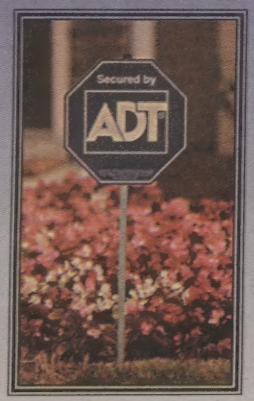

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A soulful recipe

Atlanta chef turns to comfort foods during tough times

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **DINING** RYAN LEE

THERE WAS A BIT OF A GLAMOROUS SIDE TO Calavino Donati's childhood in Wisconsin.

Hardly a night went by when Donati, along with her mother, brother and sister, weren't dining out on the town, often at the newest or most exotic restaurants.

"My mother had a passion for food and the exploration of food," says Donati, owner of Calavino's restaurant in Decatur's Oakhurst neighborhood. "If there was a new Mongolian restaurant in town, we were there, if there was a new Hibachi restaurant, we were there.

"We were regulars all around town," Donati adds. "That was the good part; the bad part was that my mother also drank."

Not one to let her and her children's appetite get in the way of a round of drinks, Donati's mother would often stay at bars late into the night as her children waited hungrily.

"Sometimes it would be 10, 11 o'clock at night, and we still didn't have dinner," says Donati, whose first cooking was done for her younger siblings.

"I opened up the cabinet and because we never ate at home, there was really nothing there," she says. "There was nothing to cook except a box of sugar cookies. I guess I added too much water, because it spread out and turned into one big sheet."

Donati began to use the money she earned doing small jobs for neighbors to go grocery shopping for her brother and sister. She also started getting informal lessons from restaurants across town, as staffers took notice of her mother's struggle and would invite Donati to help in the kitchen.

"So I got to know a lot about the restaurant business growing up like that," she says.

DONATI'S RESTAURANT ACCUMEN WAS ON DISPLAY for 10 years at her former restaurant, the Roman Lily Café in the Old Fourth Ward. Donati decided to close the restaurant when rent prices skyrocketed in the neighborhood two years ago.

After gauging the tastes of Oakhurst residents, Donati decided to open Calavino's in September 2007 as an Italian fine dining establishment. Customers have been supportive, but for many in the neighborhood, Calavino's had become a special-occasion restaurant.

"I was a date night place, or it was the 'parents-are-in-town' place, and not a mainstay restaurant," Donati says.

Tapped to cater a Thanksgiving affair for a local bank president, Donati decided to prepare traditional side dishes with her own unique twist. After whipping up dill havarti macaroni and cheese and spicy vegetarian collard greens, Calavino decided to create an entire soul food menu.

Calavino's has been hosting "Soul Food Fridays" for the past month, and the restaurant is transitioning into an entirely soul food eatery over the holidays. The menu includes staples like roasted garlic mashed potatoes and fried chicken, along with more experimental offerings like turkey poblano meatloaf and fried duck and waffle.

"SOUL FOOD FRIDAYS" ALSO FEATURES LIVE MUSIC from Donati's girlfriend, singer-songwriter Doria Roberts, and hopes to feature other musicians during weekday happy hours and at Sunday brunch.

"Because of the economy, most musicians can't travel because by the time they pay to get where they're going, there's no guarantee that they'll make enough to pay for the trip, let alone turn a profit," Donati says.

The rough economy also played a role in making Calavino's status as a special-occasion restaurant unsustainable.

"With the economy taking the downswing that it has, it's become more imperative to change with the economy," Donati says.

One item that will remain on the menu after Calavino's transition is a twist on the first meal Donati cooked for her siblings: a grilled cheese sandwich, decorated with button mushrooms to make a smiley face.

Calavino Donati is switching the menu at her Oakhurst restaurant Calavino's from Italian to soul food. (Photo via Donati's MySpace page)

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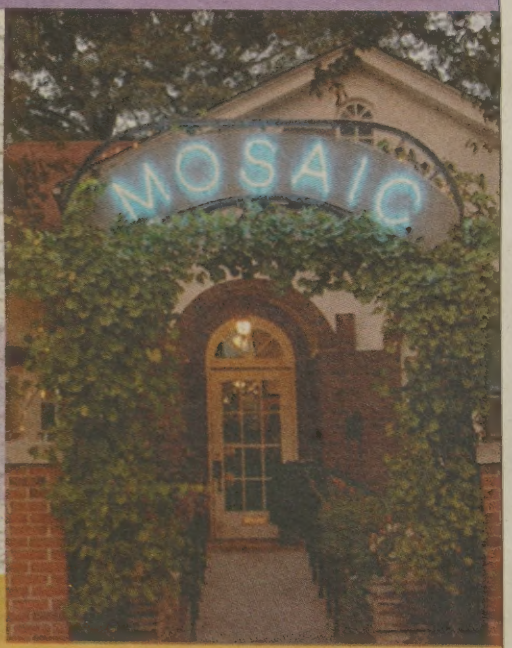

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Genius in hell

New biography deftly captures 19th century poet Rimbaud

SOUTHERN VOICE **BOOKS**

KATHI WOLFE

IN A LAND OF REALITY TV, CELEBRITY GOSSIP AND sensational headlines, poets might not get the recognition they deserve for their impact on popular culture. But renowned gay writer Edmund White's engaging new biography of 19th century French poet Arthur Rimbaud stands this myth on its head.

Rimbaud, who wrote poetry only as a teenager and died before he was 40, has influenced creative artists from Marcel Proust and surrealist painters to Bob Dylan and Patti Smith.

In fewer than 200 pages, White makes the elements of Rimbaud's life come alive, especially his battles with his overbearing mother; the moment when his lover, the better-known poet Paul Verlaine, shot him in the wrist; his travels and, most importantly, his poetry.

When Rimbaud, who lived from 1854 to 1891, was 6 years old, his father left the family, and they moved to a lower-class neighborhood. His mother, a strict Catholic determined that Rimbaud would be pious and well-behaved, forbade "her children to play with the ragamuffin neighbors," White writes. She also became enraged when she found him reading the "controversial" Victor Hugo.

By the time he was 13, Rimbaud won prizes for his schoolwork and was writing verse in Latin. But early on, he developed a horror of settling down that remained with him all his life. Bored with his provincial life, in 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War, Rimbaud "sold some books and with the few francs he earned made the first of his several escapes from home," White writes.

BARELY IN HIS TEENS, RIMBAUD BEGAN WRITING poems such as the sonnet "Vowels" and "The Drunken Boat." In his "Letter to a Seer," he called for a radical "reinvention of poetry," White writes.

Sounding like a pre-curser to Jim Morrison, Rimbaud urged poets to experiment with altered chemical states.

"The poet is a seer who achieves the visionary process by disordering his senses through alcohol, drugs, madness, disease and crime," White quotes Rimbaud.

Rimbaud morphed rapidly from an innocent schoolboy into a rebel who sunbathed in the nude, wore dirty clothes and made no effort to remove the lice from his long hair.

He "conceived of the existence of a poet as a role as much as it was a function," White writes, "in our day when performance art is ubiquitous ... Rimbaud's project seems much less surprising."

In 1871, Rimbaud met Verlaine, a married man 10 years his senior. They quickly embarked on a volatile 18-month affair. Yet, "for those modern readers who like to think that sexual orientation is straight or gay," White cautions, "Rimbaud is worrisomely hard to classify."

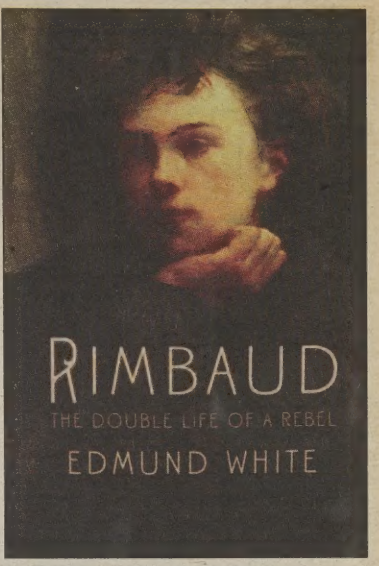
Though Rimbaud would feel a "strong, destructive passion" for Verlaine, his other interests were mainly heterosexual. This was not "a conscious effort to 'go straight,'" the biographer writes.

RIMBAUD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH VERLAINE ENDED in drama. Rimbaud went to the police after Verlaine shot him, then withdrew the charges. Despite the recant, Verlaine spent two years in prison. After Verlaine's release from jail, the two saw each other only a few more times and Rimbaud threatened to blackmail Verlaine.

During this period, Rimbaud wrote his two most famous poems, "A Season in Hell" and "Illuminations." Rimbaud was one of the first poets to write in free verse.

"In his brief writing career, Rimbaud covered the whole history of poetry," White writes, "from Latin verse ... on to the Surrealists, even before surrealism existed."

By age 21, Rimbaud decided that he was through with the literary world. Deciding that he was a failure, he spent the rest of his life working in Europe and Africa as a tradesman.



'Rimbaud: The Double Life of a Rebel'
By Edmund White
Atlas & Co.
$24, 208 pages

Years after he ceased to care about his poetry, Verlaine brought Rimbaud's work to the attention of the literary world.

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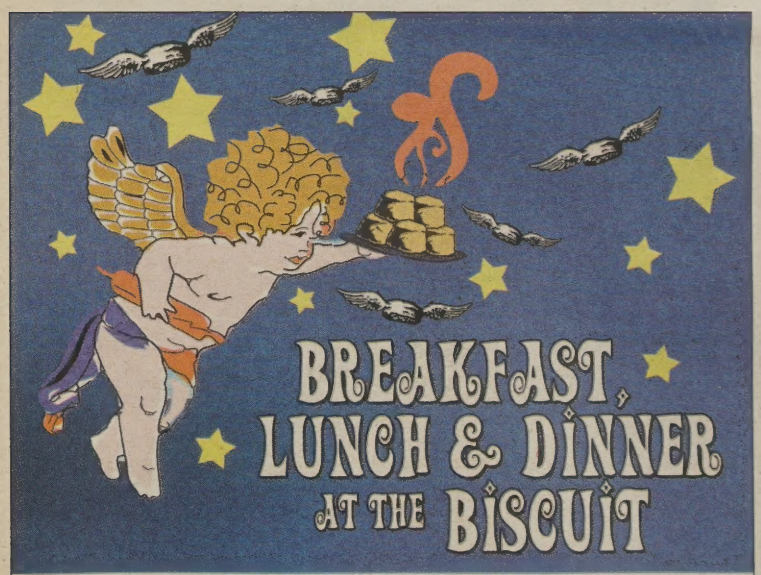

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Naughty and nice

Bellissima packs December with holiday fun

By MIKE FLEMING
mfleming@sovo.com

Anna Ragghianti (second from left) ramps up the surprises for Bellissima patrons in December. (Photo courtesy Bellissima)

WHEN BELLISSIMA LOUNGE OPENED BACK IN April of this year, it turned the stereotypical notion of lesbian bars on its ear. With a luxurious renovation to the former Miss Q's space in Amsterdam Walk, and an open vibe that welcomes not just lesbians but gay men and all other walks of life, the bar almost immediately conquered its Midtown niche.

Bellissima is the brainchild of Anna Ragghianti, the longtime girl guru of Atlanta's gay nightlife scene who is also the promoter behind SWA-RA Productions and Pride's Heaven party. She says the bar draws a mixed crowd with its "very loungey and comfortable" vibe and events that keep guests on their toes.

"People always walk in and say, 'This is so beautiful' or 'There's nothing like this in Atlanta, even for the guys,' and 'The girls have needed this for a long time,'" she says.

Business is good, and Ragghianti credits her success in part to keeping special events on the forefront of the bar's roster. But Bellissima's busy December lineup is "definitely" the product of an extra effort, according to Ragghianti. It includes a special guest DJ from Showtime's "The L-Word," a ChildKind toy benefit, a "Sexy Santa Party" and a New Year's Eve bash starring singer Sonia Leigh.

"We are always unique and trying to have something different going on so we're not just the same-ol'-same-ol'," Ragghianti says. "From the party promotion end, I like to keep people guessing and make sure they always have a good time, but we did step it up a little bit this month because we want new people to discover us."

BELLISSIMA HOLDS DECEMBER PARTIES FOR both the naughty and the nice girls and boys. Ragghianti and her crew kick off their holiday offerings in partnership with the Hotlanta Softball League and ChildKind. There's a toy-collection box out now for unwrapped kids' gifts, and Hotlanta's holiday party on Dec. 11 at Bellissima will collect the toys and distribute them through ChildKind.

Mark the weekend after all that sweetness and light for two, much more adult-oriented events. DJ DeLux is a lesbian spinmaster who is already a big deal in Canada and is gaining popularity here through her appearances as the DJ on Showtime's "The L-Word." Bellissima welcomes her to Atlanta on Dec. 13.

The night after DeLux heats up the crowd, Bellissima's Sexy Santa Party kicks in.

"We're going to have sexy 'Santa's Little Helper' go-go girls," Ragghianti says. "There will also be surprise performances throughout the night, and we might mix up a few special holiday cocktails, too."

The New Year's Eve bash at Bellissima rounds out 2008 with a performance by singer-songwriter Sonia Leigh, followed by a DJ and a midnight champagne and confetti toast.

"We've been wanting to do something together with Sonia for a long time," Ragghianti says. "The girls love her, and we want to support her because she is so great and she's local."

KEEP AN EYE ON BELLISSIMA IN THE NEW YEAR as well. On Jan. 2 and Jan. 3, an "L-Word" afterparty is planned for fans of the show after the Season 6 premiere, and Ragghianti's SWA-RA Productions hosts aerial and trapeze performances at Cirque du Soiree on Jan. 16.

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www.myspace.com/bellissima_lounge

Jessi Lynn Acoustic performance
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Hotlanta Softball League Holiday Party unwrapped gifts benefit ChildKind
Dec. 11, 7-10 p.m.

DJ Martin Fry, Dec. 12, 10 p.m.

DJ DeLux, Dec. 13, 10 p.m.

Salsa Sunday Latin Night w/DJs Lizz D. & EVE
Second and fourth Sundays, 10 p.m.

Sexy Santa Holiday Party, Dec. 19, 9 p.m.

New Year's Eve Bash w/Sonia Leigh
Dec. 31, 9 p.m. performance, Midnight champagne toast

Cirque Du Soiree
Jan. 16, 9 p.m.

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Pop puppet

Songwriters, producers mostly to blame for so-so Britney release

SO VO SOUTHERN VOICE **MUSIC**

JOEY DiGUGLIELMO

SOMETIMES IN POP MUSIC, THE MUCH-HERALD-ed comeback record isn't quite what it's cracked up to be, while the lesser-hyped disc that comes before or after it is the real gem.

It happened with Mariah. "The Emancipation of Mimi" was a decent effort, but this year's "E=MC2" is much better.

For Britney Spears, the inverse is true. "Circus," which dropped Tuesday (Spears' 27th birthday), is getting good buzz - the first single, "Womanizer," hit No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and is Spears' biggest hit since "... Baby One More Time" 10 years ago. But last year's "Blackout" is, song for song, a much better album than "Circus."

Spears, whose personal travails have been documented ad nauseam, appeared to be getting her act together, but wasn't apparently in good enough shape to promote "Blackout." But her rebirth seems more complete with "Circus."

She seems to have come to life as a recording artist again. She's winning MTV awards, had another chart-topping single and is planning a tour.

So it's ironic that "Blackout" is infinitely better than "Circus." Well, it's odd until you realize that little of the credit for Spears' albums goes to Britney herself. She only dabbles in songwriting (she co-wrote three "Circus" tracks and they're the three weakest songs on the CD) and wisely leaves production to the pros.

And nobody downloads Britney tracks because she's a great singer. She's not a bad singer, but several of her contemporaries blow her away in that regard.

Spears isn't nearly as essential to the success of her projects as, say, Justin Timberlake (her ex) is to his. Britney brings little creative worth to the equation, but is somehow the magic ingredient without which the ship wouldn't sail.

"CIRCUS" STARTS SOLIDLY WITH "WOMANIZER." It's undeniably catchy, but it's no structural wonder. The hook is built on a three-word phrase that's repeated and rearranged over a cleverly syncopated rhythm. Yes, there's something to be said for simplicity.

Britney Spears performs on a promo tour for 'Circus,' her latest album, which dropped Tuesday. (Photo by AP)

Yet "Womanizer" is one of the weaker songs in the Spears canon. Album tracks like "Bombastic Love" (2001) or masterfully conceived "Freakshow" and "Toy Soldier" from "Blackout," blow it away in terms of complexity, and even catchiness.

The slinky, sexy title track is mediocre. An air of moodiness pervades much of the rest of the album, whether it's on bland dance tracks like "Shattered Glass" or "Unusual You." "Out From Under," an obscure cover and lumbering mood piece, is poised to be the big show-stopping ballad, but it, too, falls flat.

And it goes mostly downhill from there. "Blur" is about a hangover. "Mmm Papi" is upbeat pillow talk over a '60s-flavored beat, and "If U Seek Amy" is another head-scratcher with syncopated Max Martin beats that never quite reach a froth.

THERE ARE TWO KEEPERS ON "CIRCUS." "KILL the Lights," helmed by Danja, best typifies the sensibilities that have made Spears a toast among gay men. With its nod to Norma Desmond ("I think I'm ready for my close up"), "Lights" will provide lip-syncing drag queens with fodder for years. It flirts with greatness, but doesn't ultimately achieve it.

The album's overall best track is its penultimate "Lace and Leather," an uber-catchy dominatrix-themed number that's so tawdry, a cheesy electric guitar solo three-fourths of the way through only heightens the camp factor.

Jarringly, the album immediately goes to closer "My Baby," a sickening lullaby in which Spears coos about "my baby boo," presumably one of her sons. Odes to babies almost never make good pop songs.

Ultimately, "Circus" will be remembered as Spears' comeback album, if only because the zeitgeist wasn't quite ripe for a full-fledged Spears return when "Blackout" dropped.

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Gay couple finds lasting love through differences

COUPLE, continued from Page 23

they also exposed the couple to harsh realities of gay life.

"The first time we heard of an AIDS-related death was a friend across the street," Farrar recalls. "I remember how shocked we were that this person just — whew — was gone like that.

"We missed exposure to [AIDS] because we became monogamous right around that magic barrier there," Farrar adds. "If we had continued to be promiscuous during that time, then the chances were very, very good [that we would have become infected]."

Briscoe aggress that their relationship was lifesaving.

"I feel like if it hadn't been for Roland, I wouldn't be here now," says Briscoe, who believes his bond to Farrar was strengthened while the two took care of another friend who died of AIDS in 1994.

"That was one of the most exhausting, most draining experiences I have ever had," Briscoe says. "I know I would come home sometimes from the hospital, and he would already be asleep. One night, I just stopped in the doorway, and I looked at him laying there in the bed and I thought, 'God, if he wasn't here, what would I do?'"

Over 30 years, Briscoe and Farrar have drawn strength from one another during other challenges, from career trauma to both partners losing both of their parents.

"When you go through bad times, there's just no way to describe the comfort it is to have somebody that knows you and can just sit with you and hold your hand; no words have to be spoken," Briscoe says. "It's just so much easier to absorb shocks and unpleasantness when you have someone's shoulder to cry on, or somebody to put their arm around you when you're down."

Farrar and Briscoe are now surrounded by new neighbors, from whom they continue to learn tough lessons about gay life.

"We've got young guys [in the neighborhood now] — thirty somethings — and for whatever reason, we might as well be dead, and I think it's a generational issue," says Farrar, who believes ageism is more pronounced among gay men.

"And I think it's unfortunate [the gay neighbors are aloof] because I think we both have things to gain from each other," he says.

BRISCOE AND FARRAR'S LASTING LOVE IS AN inspiration to more people than just young gay men who are convinced that all gay relationships end in doom. After a 20-year estrangement caused in part by Briscoe's homosexuality, Briscoe reunited with his sister, who now has a young gay son.

"I think she pulls a great amount of comfort from me when we discuss her son and how his life is going," Briscoe says. "I think she sees a great amount of stability in our lives."

Briscoe and Farrar consider their relationship to be as traditional as turkey and dressing, but they've never had a desire to formalize their union through marriage or a commitment ceremony.

"After 30 years, is it really necessary?" Briscoe says.

"If we had come up in a different generation, we might see the value of that, but I think it's just sort of over-the-top now," Farrar adds.

The couple has managed to keep their feuds limited over three decades, except for a dispute over where to place a paper towel dispenser that threatened their tranquility. Instead of allowing their conflicting personalities to spark actual conflicts, Farrar and Briscoe have learned to nurture their differences.

"If you're too much the same, I think it works against you," Farrar says. "There's enough difference in personality types where it works for us."

Farrar's opposite personality also taught Briscoe that he had to abandon his earlier notions of love and relationships.

"I used to have this philosophy that if I was with somebody, I would plan things out — where we were going to be two years from now, five years from now," Briscoe says. "Well that went out the window real fast. I realized when you're with somebody that's different than you are, you can't really plan another person's life. So instead of doing that, we would just go from week to week, month to month, year to year."

Thirty years later, Briscoe has advice for young gay couples who are unsure if love can survive.

"They have so many negatives nagging at them that they feel overwhelmed and sometimes they sit back and wonder, well, is it worth it to try to maintain a relationship with another man in light of all of these obstacles," Briscoe says. "All I can say is if you love the person, stick with them through thick and thin, and down the road you'll be glad you did. If you've made it five years, you're over the worst."

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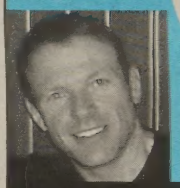

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Reborn, again

'N Sync reunion steals Lance Bass more spotlight

Lance Bass (Photo by AP)

Now that "Dancing with the Stars" is over, **LANCE BASS** must think of new ways to stay in the media. But sadly, he's running out of tricks to pull out of his hat.

He already came out, dated a high-profile himbo (Reichen), wrote his memoirs (at the wise old age of 28), and staged a comeback on a B-rated reality show. What's left? Just start all over again!

dish
There's a Fine Line Between Telling the Truth and Talking Trash

In an interview with In Touch Magazine, Bass says a reunion with his former 'N Sync boy-banders is on the horizon. He claims, "there are so many crazy doors opening" after his third-place finish on "Dancing with the Stars."

There is also talk of him going back into the studio alone. But his first priority is to sing with 'N Sync again. Dish is not surprised; no one has ever heard Bass sing solo (hint, hint).

But the reunion may be more than just wishful thinking: according to Bass, the quintet hasn't completed its recording contracts, and they still owe an album or two to their label. So that reunion is imminent. Somewhere, **JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE** has a raging headache.

Boy George now admits to beating escort

Last week, Dish brought you the news that '80s pop icon George O'Dowd — better known as **BOY GEORGE** — was scurrilously accused of assaulting a male escort. The boy-for-hire told police George lured him to his apartment, handcuffed him and beat him mercilessly until he freed himself and fled down the street in his underwear. Of course, George denied the tawdry affair.

New evidence shows he basically admitted to the scenario, however. In his statement to police, he said he did handcuff Carlsen, but George believed the escort had stolen nude photos of him, and he didn't want the boy to run away before he could check his computer.

And yes, he had hit Carlsen, but that was for fun.

"You can't spank anyone if they don't want you to," he said in his statement to police. Dish will have to remember that.

It's now up to the British courts to decide if George's actions constituted a crime. Considering this is the same legal system that permits **GEORGE MICHAEL** to drive a car through any public park he chooses, it is presumed that O'Dowd will get a slap on the wrist.

Anderson gets wet for Phelps

Anderson Cooper (Photo by AP)

Despite that rigid exterior, **ANDERSON COOPER** can cut loose and have a little fun now and then. As long as there is a man in a Speedo within reach.

In an interview for "60 Minutes," Cooper tagged along with **MICHAEL PHELPS** as the Olympic champion went about his day. Eventually, they swung by the pool, and boys being boys, Cooper challenged Phelps to a race. Needless to say, Phelps won handily, although a breathless and giggly Cooper didn't seem disappointed to lose.

Note to Coop: next time, try some bronzer. You nearly blinded us with that pale flesh.

Nevertheless, Dish is impressed, Cooper has certainly lightened up. Just a few months ago, when he co-hosted "Live with Regis and Kelly," the effervescent Kelly Ripa goaded him into joining a naughty aerobics session. Cooper balked and flatly refused the pelvic thrusts, saying it would violate his journalistic integrity.

But strip down and dive into the pool with Phelps? No problem! Roll that camera.

Send comments, suggestions to **Dish@sovo.com**

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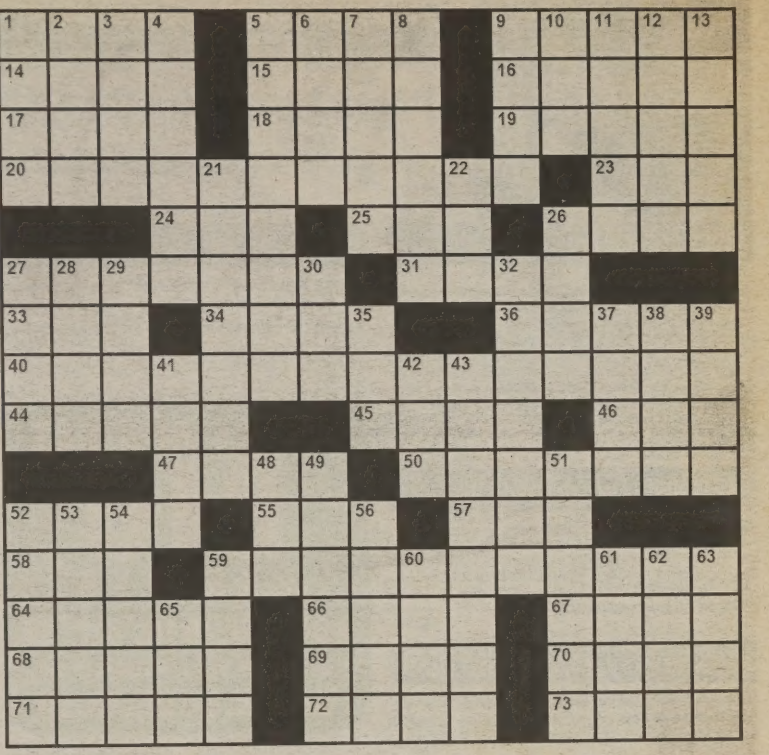

Q Puzzle: UNO RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

ACROSS

1. Taylor of "Six Feet Under"
5. They're pretty straight on the Kinsey Scale
9. Kate Clinton's "___ in Joyland"
14. Tyson Gay statement?
15. NCAA home of the Bruins
16. Shelley Duvall role in "Popeye"
17. "___ the grass in the fields...": Whitman
18. Kipling's Rikki-tikki-___
19. Pester, as Albert to Armand
20. Butch name for a blues singer?
23. Rene Auberjonois on "Deep Space Nine"
24. Would-be master's test
25. Place for porking?
26. A Brit soldier may shoot it off
27. One who may take a tumble
31. "Family Guy" and "American Dad" creator MacFarlane
33. "Come again?"
34. Tops a cupcake
36. Make into balls
40. Have a date with a woman who doesn't date men?
44. Gay former NFL player Tuaolo
45. Longs, to a Samurai?
46. "___ Miz"
47. Mounts, to Maria von Trapp
50. One who doesn't believe in the Divine Miss M?
52. Suck air
55. Patricia Highsmith, ___ Claire Morgan
57. "Queer as Folk" co-creator Cowen
58. Col. Cammermeyer's onetime address
59. Online venue for discussing Ben Hur?
64. Shaft of a knight
66. Collette of "Connie and Carla"
67. River near Michelangelo's "David"
68. Drag queen Joey
69. Do a nocturnal activity
70. Dying one in a Craig Lucas title
71. Get the ball rolling
72. "Nuts!"
73. "Showboat"'s "Nobody ___ But Me"

DOWN

1. Neeson of "Kinsey"
2. La Douce role of Shirley
3. Bear's hangout
4. Color of a "Girls" band
5. Promoting tolerance, e.g.
6. Trojans' org.
7. Jonathan Rhys Meyers title role
8. Peter and Mary
9. Like an erection?
10. Home of T. Bankhead
11. Homophobe, for one
12. Give the slip to
13. Place atop
21. Like the path of Uranus
22. Queer body part on TV
26. "Femme's Guide to the Universe" author Rednour
27. Words of woe, to the Bard
28. Sticks in a bar?
29. Syngman of Korea
30. Ball holder
32. Like some WNBA fouls
35. Professional voyeur?
37. Where you can eat a hero
38. Treats as a sexual object
39. Head-turner
41. Hazard for Sheehan
42. "Breakfast on Pluto" actor Stephen
43. Mass openings
48. "Poppycock!"
49. Rudy Galindo, for one
51. Piss off
52. Human Rights Campaign fundraiser, and such
53. Like unhappy lovers, maybe
54. Rutstein of "Disappear Fear"
56. Emanation from Feniger's kitchen
59. "Camelot"'s "___ Moi"
60. Pt. of B.D. Wong
61. Type of stimulation
62. Bottoms' description of tops?
63. Marilyn Monroe facial feature
65. The Batmobile, e.g.

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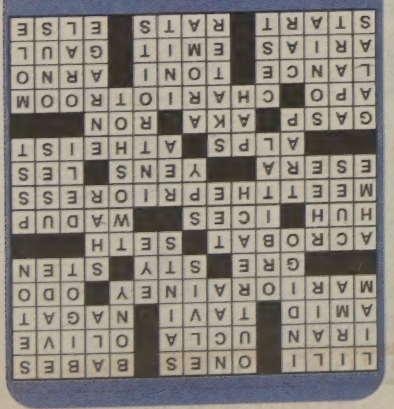
Uno River Runs Through It



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To compliment your dining experience, VITA's large vibrant bar is a perfect place to gather for cocktails and enjoy sporting events on our high definition televisions. Nightly entertainment from piano players to live local bands help in creating a unique atmosphere to enjoy while dining on our authentic family – style New York Italian cuisine. Our full menu is served until 1 a.m. nightly. Call for a schedule of entertainment or to reserve your spot – 404-367-8482.

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www.vitaatl.com

HOURS

Monday - Friday 5PM - 2AM
Saturday 11AM - 2AM
Sunday 11am - Midnight
Serving A Full Menu Until 1AM Nightly
Serving Brunch Saturday & Sunday 11AM - 4PM

2110 Peachtree Road Suite B Atlanta, GA 30309

404.367.8482 www.vitaatl.com